Return to John Scholl
596 Main St.
Pennsburg, Pa.

THE RIFLE RANGERS

A THRILLING STORY OF DARING ADVENTURE
AND HAIRBREADTH ESCAPES DURING
THE MEXICAN WAR

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID

AUTHOR OF "THE SCALP HUNTERS," "AFLOAT IN THE FOREST," ETC.

NEW YORK
THE F. M. LUPTON PUBLISHING COMPANY
1899

Copyright, 1899,
By S. C. ANDREWS.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	The Land of Anahuac	5
II.	An Adventure Among the Creoles of New Orleans	25
III.	A Volunteer Rendezvous	31
IV.	Life on the Island of Lobos	38
V.	Lieutenant Sibley's Story of a Georgia hotel	42
VI.	Major Twing's Story of the Guyas-Cutis	48
VII.	A Skeleton Adventure	61
VIII.	The Landing at Sacrificios	69
IX.	The City of the True Cross	76
X.	Major Blossom	84
XI.	Scouting in the Chapparal	89
XII.	Adventure with a Cayman	101
XIII.	Don Cosmé Rosales	110
XIV.	A Mexican Dinner	118
XV.	A Subterranean Drawing-room	126
XVI.	"The Norther"	133
XVII.	A Little Fair Weather Again	138
XVIII.	The Scout Continued with a Variety of Reflections	143
XIX.	One Way of Taming a Bull	148
XX.	A Brush with the Guerilleros	154
XXI.	A Herculean Feat	159
XXII.	Running the Gauntlet	163
XXIII.	A Short Fight at "Long Shot"	169
XXIV.	The Rescue	179
XXV.	The Cocuyo	185
XXVI.	Lupé and Luz	192
XXVII.	A Tough Night of It after All	197
XXVIII.	The Light after the Shade	201
XXIX.	A Disappointment and a New Plan	208
XXX.	A Foolhardy Adventure	213
XXXI.	Help from Heaven	218
XXXII.	A Shot in the Dark	227
XXXIII.	Captured by Guerilleros	234
XXXIV.	A Blind Ride	242

PAGE

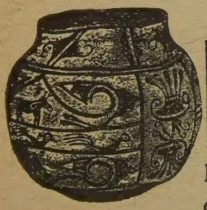
XXXV. A Drink à la Cheval 246
XXXVI. An Odd Way of Opening a Letter 252
XXXVII. The Cobra-di-Capello 256
XXXVIII. The Head-quarters of the Guerilla 260
XXXIX. Chane's Courtship 268
XL. The Dance of the Tagarota 274
XLI. A Kiss in the Dark 278
XLII. Maria de Merced 284
XLIII. The Pursuit 289
XLIV. A New and Terrible Enemy 292
XLV. A Battle with Bloodhounds 297
XLVI. An Indian Ruse 300
XLVII. A Coup d'Eclair 305
XLVIII. A Bridge of Monkeys 309
XLIX. The Jarachos 315
L. Padre Jarauta 320
LI. A Hang by the Heels 326
LII. A Very Short Trial 334
LIII. A Bird's-Eye View of a Battle 340
LIV. An Odd Way of Escaping from a Battle-field 344
LV. A Wholesale Capture 349
LVI. A Duel with an Odd Ending 358
LVII. A Brace of Ruffian Soldiers 364
LVIII. A Brace of Foolish Officers 372
LIX. "The Child of Atocha" 379
LX. The Barranca 390
LXI. A Death Struggle 401
LXII. An Adios 411

Scene in Tropical America. Boatmen Attending Mass.

THE RIFLE RANGERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAND OF ANAHUAC.*



AWAY over the dark, wild waves of the rolling Atlantic—away beyond the summer islands of the Western Ind—lies a lovely land. Its surface-aspect carries the hue of the emerald; its sky is sapphire; its sun is a globe of gold. It is the land of Anahuac.

The tourist turns his face to the Orient—the poet sings

* For pronunciations, definitions of *patois*, and other peculiarities that occur in the following pages, the reader is referred to the "Explanatory Notes" at the end of the volume.

the gone glories of Greece—the painter elaborates the hackneyed pictures of Apennine and Alp—the novelist turns the skulking thief of Italy into a picturesque bandit, or, Don Quixote-like, betaking himself into the misty middle age, entertains the romantic miss and milliner's apprentice with stories of raven steeds, of plumed and impossible heroes. All—painter, poet, tourist, and novelist—in search of the bright and beautiful, the poetic and the picturesque—turn their backs upon this lovely land.

Shall we? No! Westward, like the Genoese, we boldly venture—over the dark wild waves of the rolling Atlantic; through among the sunny islands of Ind—westward to the land of Anahuac. Let us debark upon its shores; let us pierce the secret depths of its forests; let us climb its mighty mountains, and traverse its table-plains.

Go with us, tourist! Fear not. You shall look upon scenes grand and gloomy, bright and beautiful. Poet! you shall find themes for poesy worthy its loftiest strains. Painter! for you there are pictures fresh from the hand of God. Writer! there are stories still untold by the author-artist—legends of love and hate, of gratitude and revenge, of falsehood and devotion, of noble virtue and ignoble crime—legends redolent of romance, rich in reality.

Thither we steer, over the dark wild waves of the rolling Atlantic; through the summer islands of the Western Ind; onward—onward to the shores of Anahuac!

Varied is the aspect of that picture-land, abounding in scenes that change like the tints of the opal. Varied is the surface which these pictures adorn. Valleys that open deep into the earth; mountains that lead the eye far up into heaven; plains that stretch to the horizon's verge, until the rim of the blue canopy seems to rest upon their limitless level; "rolling" landscapes, whose softly-turned ridges remind one of the wavy billows of the ocean.

Alas! word-painting can give but a faint idea of these

scenes. The pen can but feebly portray the grand and sublime effect produced upon the mind of him who gazes down into the deep valleys, or glances upward to the mighty mountains of Mexico.

Though feeble be the effort, I shall attempt a series of sketches from memory. They are the panoramic views that present themselves during a single "jornada."

I stand upon the shores of the Mexican Gulf. The waves lip gently up to my feet upon a beach of silvery sand. The water is pure and translucent, of azure blue, here and there crested with the pearly froth of coral breakers. I look to the eastward, and behold a summer sea that seems to invite navigation. But where are the messengers of commerce with their white wings? The solitary skiff of the savage "pescador" is making its way through the surf; a lone "polacca" beats up the coast with its half-smuggler crew; a "piragua" swings at anchor in a neighboring cove: this is all! Far as eye and glass can reach, no other sail is in sight. The beautiful sea before me is almost unfurrowed by the keels of commerce.

From this I draw ideas of the land and its inhabitants—unfavorable ideas of their moral and material condition. No commerce—no industry—no prosperity. Stay! What see I yonder? Perhaps I have been wronging them. A dark, tower-like object looms up against the horizon. It is the smoke of a steamer—sign of advanced civilization—emblem of active life. She nears the shore. Ha! a foreign flag—the flag of another land trails over her taffrail; a foreign flag floats at her peak; foreign faces appear above her bulwarks, and foreign words issue from the lips of her commander. She is not of the land. My first conjecture was right.

She makes for the principal port. She lands a small parcel of letters and papers, a few bales of merchandise, half a dozen slightly-formed cadaverous men; and then, putting about, a gun is fired, and she is off again. She

soon disappears away upon the wide ocean ; and the waves once more roll silently in—their glistening surface broken only by the flapping of the albatross or the plunge of the osprey.

* * * * * *

I direct my eyes northward. I behold a belt of white sand skirting the blue water. I turn towards the south, and in this direction perceive a similar belt. To both points it extends beyond the reach of vision—hundreds of miles beyond—forming, like a ribbon of silver, the selvage of the Mexican Sea. It separates the turquoise blue of the water from the emerald green of the forest, contrasting with each by its dazzling whiteness. Its surface is far from being level, as is usual with the ocean-strand. On the contrary, its millions of sparkling atoms, rendered light by the burning sun of the tropic, have been lifted on the wings of the wind, and thrown into hills and ridges hundreds of feet in height, and trending in every direction like the wreaths of a great snow-drift. I advance with difficulty over these naked ridges, where no vegetation finds nourishment in the inorganic heap. I drag myself wearily along, sinking deeply at every step. I climb sand-hills of strange and fantastic shapes, cones, and domes, and roof-like ridges, where the sportive wind seems to have played with the plastic mass, as children with potter's clay. I encounter huge basins like the crater of volcanoes, formed by the circling swirl ; deep chasms and valleys, whose sides are walls of sand, steep, often vertical, and not unfrequently impending with comb-like escarpments.

All these features may be changed in a single night, by the magical breath of the "norther." The hill to-day may become the valley to-morrow, and the elevated ridge have given place to the sunken chasm.

Upon the summits of these sand-heights I am fanned by

the cool breeze from the Gulf. I descend into the sheltered gorges, and am burned by a tropic sun, whose beams, reflected from a thousand crystals, torture my eyes and brain. In these parts the traveler is often the victim of the *coup-de-soleil.*

* * * * * *

Yonder comes the "*norte*"! Along the northern horizon the sky suddenly changes from light blue to a dark lead color. Sometimes rumbling thunder with arrowy lightning portends the change; but if neither seen nor heard, it is soon felt. The hot atmosphere, that, but a moment before, encased me in its glowing embrace, is suddenly pierced by a chill breeze, that causes my skin to creep and my frame to shiver. In its icy breath there is fever—there is death; for it carries on its wings the dreaded "vomito." The breeze becomes a strong wind—a tempest. The sand is lifted upwards, and floats through the air in dun clouds, here settling down, and there rising up again. I dare not face it, any more than I would the blast of the simoon. I should be blinded if I did, or blistered by the "scud" of the angular atoms. The "norther" continues for hours, sometimes for days. It departs as suddenly as it came, carrying its baneful influence to lands farther south.

It is past, and the sand-hills have assumed a different shape. The ridges trend differently. Some have disappeared, and valleys yawn open where they stood!

Such are the shores of Anahuac—the shores of the Mexican Sea. Without commerce—almost harborless—a waste of sand; but a waste of striking appearance and picturesque beauty.

* * * * * *

To horse and inwards! Adieu to the bright blue waters of the Gulf!

We have crossed the sand-ridges of the coast, and are rid-

ing through the shadowy aisles of the forest. It is a tropical forest. The outlines of the leaves, their breadth, their glowing colors all reveal this. The eye roams with delight over a frondage that partakes equally of the gold and the green. It revels along waxen leaves, as those of the magnolia, the plantain and the banana. It is led upward by the rounded trunks of the palms, that like columns appear to support the leafy can-

Members of the First Families of Mexico.

opy above. It penetrates the network of vines, or follows the diagonal direction of gigantic llianas, that creep like monster serpents from tree to tree. It gazes with pleased wonder upon the huge bamboo-briers and tree-ferns. Wherever it turns, flowers open their corollas to meet its delighted glance —tropical tree-flowers, blossoms of the scarlet vine, and trumpet-shaped tubes of the bignonia.

I turn my eyes to every side, and gaze upon a floral to me strange and interesting. I behold the tall stems of the *palma*

real rising one hundred feet without leaf or branch, and supporting a parachute of feathery fronds that wave to the slightest impulse of the breeze. Beside it I see its constant companion, the Indian cane—a small palm-tree, whose slender trunk and low stature contrast oddly with the colossal proportions of its lordly protector. I behold the "corozo" of the same genus with the *palma real*—its light feathery frondage streaming outwards and bending downwards, as if to protect from the hot sun the globe-shaped nuts that hang in grape-like clusters beneath. I see the "abanico," with its enormous fan-shaped leaves; the wax-palm distilling its resinous gum; and the "acrocomia," with its thorny trunk and enormous racemes of golden fruits. By the side of the stream I guide my horse among the columnar stems of the noble coeva which has been enthusiastically but appropriately termed the "bread of life" (*pan de vida*).

I gaze with wonder upon the ferns, those strange creatures of the vegetable world, that upon the hillsides of my own far island-home scarce reach the knee in height. Here they are arborescent—tree-ferns—rivaling their cousins the palms in stature, and like them, with their tall, straight stems and lobed leaves, contributing to the picturesqueness of the landscape. I admire the beautiful mammey with its great oval fruit and saffron pulp. I ride under the spreading limbs of the mahogany-tree, marking its oval pinnate leaves, and the egg-like seed capsules that hang from its branches; thinking as well of the brilliant surfaces that lie concealed within its dark and knotty trunk. Onward I ride, through glistening foliage and glowing flowers, that, under the beams of a tropic sun, present the varying hues of the rainbow.

There is no wind—scarcely a breath stirring; yet here and there the leaves are in motion. The wings of bright birds flash before the eye, passing from tree to tree. The gaudy tanagers, that cannot be tamed—the noisy lories, the resplendent trogons, the toucans with their huge clumsy bills, and

the tiny bee-birds (the *trochili* and *colibri*)—all glance through the sunny vistas.

The carpenter-bird—the great woodpecker—hangs against the decayed trunk of some dead tree, beating the hollow bark, and now and then sounding his clarion note, which is heard to the distance of a mile. Out of the under wood

An Aerial Republic. Nest of the Sociable Weaver Birds.

springs the crested curassow; or, basking in the sun-lit glades, with outspread wings gleaming with metallic luster, may be seen the beautiful turkey of Honduras.

The graceful roe (*cervus Mexicanus*) bounds forward, startled by the tread of the advancing horse. The caiman crawls lazily along the bank, or hides his hideous body under the water of a sluggish stream, and the not less hideous form of the iguana, recognized by its serrated crest, is seen

crawling up the tree-trunk or lying along the slope of a lliana. The green lizard scuttles along the path—the basilisk looks with glistening eyes from the dark interstices of some corrugated vine—the biting geckotin glides among the dry leaves in pursuit of its insect prey—and the chameleon advances sluggishly along the branches, while it assumes their color to deceive its victims.

Serpent forms present themselves. Now and then the huge boa and the macaurel, twining the trees. The great tiger-snake is seen with his head raised half a yard from the surface; the cascabel, too, coiled like a cable; and the coral-snake with his red and ringed body stretched at full length along the ground. The two last, though inferior in size to the boas, are more to be dreaded; and my horse springs back when he sees the one glistening through the grass, or hears the "skir-r-r-r" of the other threatening to strike.

Quadrupeds and quadrumana appear. The red monkey (*mono colorado*) runs at the traveler's approach, and, flinging himself from limb to limb, hides among the vines and *Tillandsia* on the high tree-tops; and the tiny ouistiti, with its pretty, childlike countenance, peers innocently through the leaves; while the ferocious zambo fills the woods with its hideous, half-human voice.

The jaguar is not far distant, "laired" in the secret depths of the impenetrable jungle. His activity is nocturnal, and his beautiful spotted body may not be seen except by the silver light of the moon. Roused by accident, or pressed by the dogs of the hunter, he may cross my path. So, too, may the ocelot and the lynx; or, as I ride silently on, I may chance to view the long, tawny form of the Mexican lion, crouched upon a horizontal limb, and watching for the timid stag that must pass beneath. I turn prudently aside, and leave him to his hungry vigil.

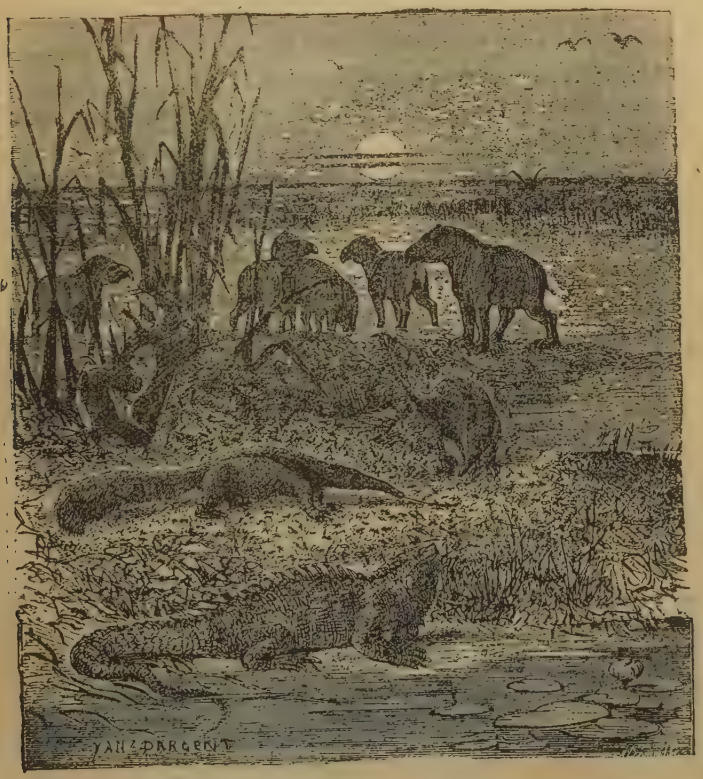
Night brings a change. The beautiful birds—the parrots, the toucans, and the trogons all go to rest at an

early hour; and other winged creatures take possession of the air. Some need not fear the darkness, for their very life is light. Such are the "cocuyos," whose brilliant lamps of green, and gold, and flame, gleam through the aisles of the forest, until the air seems on fire. Such, too, are the "gusanitos," the female of which—a wingless insect, like a glow-worm—lies along the leaf, while her mate whirrs gaily

Desperate Encounter with a Mexican Jaguar.

around, shedding his most captivating gleams as he woos her upon the wing. But, though light is the life of these beautiful creatures, it is often the cause of their death. It guides their enemies—the night hawk and the "whip-poor-will," the bat, and the owl. Of these last, the hideous vampire may be seen flapping his broad dark wings in quick, irregular turnings, and the great "lechuza" (*strix Mexicana*), issuing from his dark tree-cave, utters his fearful notes, that

resemble the moanings of one who is being hanged. Now may be heard the scream of the cougar, and the hoarser voice of the Mexican tiger. Now may be heard the wild,



Moonlight in the Tropics : Tapirs, Ant-Eaters and Iguana.

disagreeable cries of the howling monkeys (*alouattes*), and the barking of the dog-wolf; and, blending with these, the croaking of the tree-toads and the shrill tinkling of the bell-frog. Perhaps the air is no longer, as in the day-time, filled with sweet perfumes. The aroma of a thousand flowers has

yielded to the fetid odor of the skunk (*mephilis chinga*)—for that singular creature is abroad; and having quarreled with one of the forest denizens, has caused all of them to feel the power of its resentment.

Such are some of the features of the tropical forest that lies between the Gulf and the Mexican mountains. But the aspect of this region is not all wild. There are cultivated districts—settlements, though far apart.

The forest opens, and the scene suddenly changes. Before me is a plantation—the hacienda of a "rico." There are wide fields tilled by peon serfs, who labor and sing; but their song is sad. Its music is melancholy. It is the voice of a conquered race.

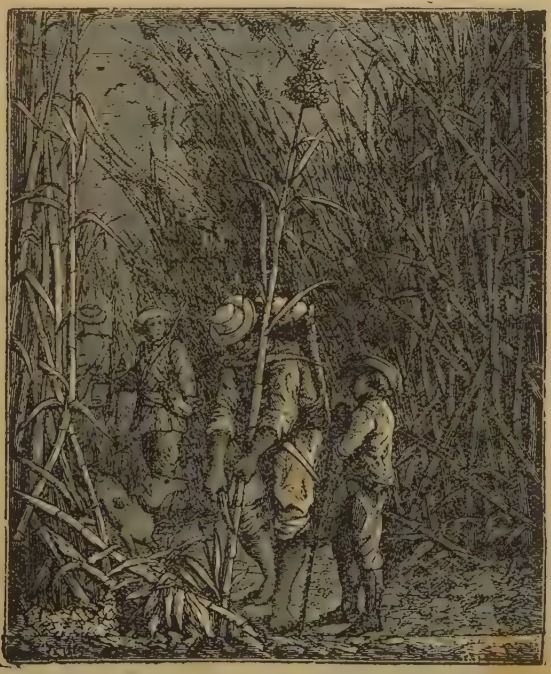
Yet the scene around them is gay and joyful. All but the people appears to prosper. Vegetation luxuriates in its fullest growth. Both fruit and flower exhibit the hues of a perfect development. Man alone seems stunted in his outlines.

There is a beautiful stream meandering through the open fields Its waters are clear and cool. They are the melted snows of Orizava. Upon its banks grow clumps of the cocoa-palm and the majestic plantain. There are gardens upon its banks, and orchards filled with the fruit-trees of the tropics. I see the orange with its golden globes, the sweet lime, the shaddock, and the guava-tree. I ride under the shade of the aguacate (*laurus Persea*), and pluck the luscious fruits of the cherimolla. The breeze blowing over fields carries on its wings the aroma of the coffee-tree, the indigo plant, the vanilla bean, or the wholesome cacao (*theobroma cacao*); and, far as the eye can reach, I see glancing gaily in the sun the green spears and golden tassels of the sugar-cane.

Interesting is the aspect of the tropical forest. Not less so is that of the tropical *field*. . . .

I ride onward and inward into the land. I am gradually ascending from the sea-level. I no longer travel upon

horizontal paths, but over hills and steep ridges, across deep valleys and ravines. The hoof of my horse no longer sinks in light sand or dark alluvion. It rings upon rocks of amygdaloid and porphyry. The soil is changed; the scenery has undergone a change, and even the atmosphere that surrounds



A Sugar-cane Plantation.

me. The last is perceptibly cooler, but not yet cold. I am still in the *piedmont* lands—the *tierras calientes*. The *templadas* are yet far higher. I am only a thousand yards or so above sea-level. I am in the "foot-hills" of the Northern Andes.

How sudden is this change! It is less than an hour since

I parted from the plains below, and yet the surface-aspect around me is like that of another land. I halt in a wild spot, and survey it with eyes that wander and wonder. The leaf is less broad, the foliage less dense, the jungle more open. There are ridges whose sides are nearly naked of tree-timber. The palms have disappeared, but in their place grow kindred forms that in many respects resemble them. They are, in fact, the palms of the mountains. I behold the great palmetto (*chamærops*), with its fan-like fronds standing out upon long petioles from its lofty summit; the yuccas, with their bayonet-shaped leaves, ungraceful, but picturesque, with ponderous clusters of green and pulpy capsules. I behold the *pita* aloe, with its tall flower-stalk and thorny sun-scorched leaves. I behold strange forms of the cactus, with their glorious wax-like blossoms; the cochineal, the tuna, the opuntias—the great tree-cactus "Foconoztle" (*opuntia arborescens*) and the tall pitahaya (*cereus giganteus*), with columnar shafts and straight upright arms, like the branches of gigantic candelabra; the echino-cacti too—those huge mammals of the vegetable world, resting their globular or egg-shaped forms, without trunk or stalk, upon the surface of the earth.

There, too, I behold gigantic thistles (*cardonales*) and mimosas, both shrubby and arborescent—the tree-mimosa, and the sensitive plant (*mimosa frutescens*), that shrinks at my approach, and closes its delicate leaflets until I have passed out of sight. This is the favorite land of the acacia; and immense tracts, covered with its various species, form impenetrable thickets (*chapparals*). I distinguish in these thickets the honey-locust, with its long purple legumes, the "algarobo" (carob-tree), and the thorny "mezquite"; and, rising over all the rest, I descry the tall, slender stem of the *Fouquiera splendens*—with panicles of tube-shaped crimson flowers.

There is less of animal life here; but even these wild

ridges have their denizens. The cochineal insect crawls upon the cactus leaf, and huge winged ants build their clay nests upon the branches of the acacia-tree. The ant-bear squats upon the ground, and projects his glutinous tongue over the beaten highway, where the busy insects rob the mimosæ of their aromatic leaves. The armadillo, with his bands and rhomboidal scales, takes refuge in the dry recesses of the rocks, or, clewing himself up, rolls over the cliff to escape his pursuer. Herds of cattle, half wild, roam through the grassy glades, or over the tufted ridges, lowing for water; and black vultures (zopilotes) sail through the cloudless heavens, waiting for some scene of death to be enacted in the thickets below.

Here, too, I pass through scenes of cultivation. Here is the hut of the peon and the rancho of the small proprietor; but they are structures of a more substantial kind than in the region of the palm. They are of stone. Here, too, is the hacienda, with its low white walls and prison-like windows; and the pueblita, with its church and cross and gaily painted steeple. Here the Indian corn takes the place of the sugar-cane, and I ride through wide fields of the broad-leafed tobacco-plant. Here grow the jalap and the guaiacum, the sweet-scented sassafras and the sanitary copaiba.

I ride onward, climbing steep ridges and descending into chasms (barrancas) that yawn deeply and gloomily. Many of these are thousands of feet in depth; and the road that enables me to reach their bottoms is often no more than a narrow ledge of the impending cliff, running terrace-like over a foaming torrent.

Still onward and upward I go, until the "foot-hills" are passed, and I enter a defile of the mountains themselves—a pass of the Mexican Andes.

I ride through, under the shadow of dark forests and rocks of blue porphyry. I emerge upon the other side of the sierra. A new scene opens before my eyes—a scene of

such soft loveliness that I suddenly rein up my horse, and gaze upon it with mingled feelings of admiration and astonishment. I am looking on one of the "vallés" of Mexico, those great table-plains that lie within the cordilleras of the Andes, thousands of feet above ocean level, and, along with these mountains, stretching from the tropic almost to the shores of the Arctic Sea.

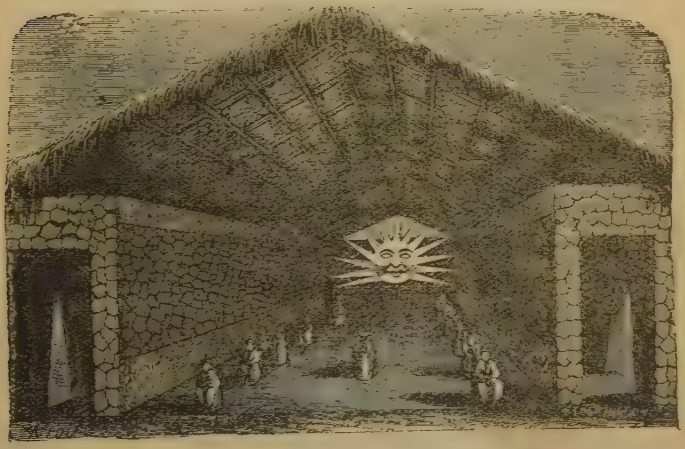
The plain before me is level, as though its surface were liquid. I see mountains bounding it on all sides; but there are passes through them that lead into other plains (vallés). These mountains have no foot-hills. They *stand up* directly from the plain itself, sometimes with sloping conical sides—sometimes in precipitous cliffs.

I ride into the plain and survey its features. There is no resemblance to the land I have left—the *tierra caliente*. I am now in the *tierra templada*. New objects present themselves—a new aspect is before, a new atmosphere around me. The air is colder, but it is only the temperature of spring. To me it feels chilly, coming so lately from the hot lands below; and I fold my cloak closely around me, and ride on.

The view is open, for the vallé is almost treeless. The scene is no longer wild. The earth has a cultivated aspect—an aspect of civilization: for these high plateaux—the *tierras templadas*—are the seat of Mexican civilization. Here are the towns—the great cities, with their rich cathedrals and convents—here dwells the bulk of the population. Here the rancho is built of unburnt bricks (*adobés*)—a mud cabin, often enclosed by hedges of the columnar cactus. Here are whole villages of such huts, inhabited by the dark-skinned descendants of the ancient Aztecs.

Fertile fields are around me. I behold the maguey of culture (*agavè Americana*), in all its giant proportions. The lancelike blades of the zea maize wave with a rich rustling in the breeze, for here that beautiful plant grows in its

greatest luxuriance. Immense plains are covered with wheat, with capsicum, and the Spanish bean (*frijoles.*) My eyes are gladdened by the sight of roses climbing along the wall or twining the portal. Here, too, the potato (*solanum tuberosum*) flourishes in its native soil; the pear and the pomegranate, the quince and the apple, are seen in the orchard; and the cereals of the temperate zone grow side by side with the cucurbitaceæ of the tropics.



Among the Aztecs. A Temple of the Sun.

I pass from one vallé into another, by crossing a low ridge of the dividing mountains. Mark the change! A surface of green is before me, reaching on all sides to the mountain foot; and upon this roam countless herds, tended by mounted "vaqueros."

I pass another ridge, and another vallé stretches before me. Again a change! A desert of sand, over the surface of which move tall dun columns of swirling dust, like the gigantic phantoms of some spirit-world. I look into another

vallé, and behold shining waters—lakes like inland seas—with sedgy shores and surrounded by green savannas, and vast swamps covered with reeds and "tulares" (bulrush).

Still another plain, black with lava and the scoriæ of extinct volcanoes—black, treeless and herbless—with not an atom of organic matter upon its desolate surface.

Such are the features of the plateau land—varied, and vast, and full of wild interest.

I leave it and climb higher—nearer to the sky—up the steep sides of the Cordilleras—up to the *tierra fria.*

* * * * * * *

I stand ten thousand feet above the level of the ocean. I am under the deep shadows of a forest. Huge trunks grow around me, hindering a distant view. Where am I? Not in the tropic, surely, for these trees are of a northern *sylva.* I recognize the gnarled limbs and lobed leaves of the oak, the silvery branches of the mountain-ash, the cones and needles of the pine. The wind, as it swirls among the dead leaves, causes me to shiver; and high up among the twigs there is the music of winter in its moaning. Yet I am in the torrid zone; and the same sun that now glances coldly through the boughs of the oak, but a few hours before scorched me as it glistened from the fronds of the palm-tree.

The forest opens, and I behold hills under culture—fields of hemp and flax, and the hardy cereals of the frigid zone. The rancho of the husbandman is a log cabin, with shingled roof and long projecting eaves, unlike the dwellings either of the great vallés or the *tierras calientes.* I pass the smoking pits of the "carbonero," and I meet the "arriero" with his "atajo" of mules heavily laden with ice of the glaciers. They are passing with their cargoes, to cool the wine-cups in the great cities of the plains. . . .

Upward and upward! The oak is left behind, and the

pine grows stunted and dwarfish. The wind blows colder and colder. A wintry aspect is around me. . . .

Upward still. The pine disappears. No vegetable form is seen save the mosses and lichens that cling to the rocks, as within the Arctic Circle. I am on the selvage of the snow —the eternal snow. I walk upon glaciers, and through their translucent mass I behold the lichens growing beneath.

The scene is bleak and desolate, and I am chilled to the marrow of my bones.

Excelsior! excelsior! The highest point is not yet reached. Through drifts of snow and over fields of ice, up steep ledges, along the slippery escarpment that overhangs the giddy absym, with wearied knees, and panting breath, and frozen fingers, onward and upward I go. Ha! I have won the goal. I am on the summit!

I stand on the "cumbre" of Orizava—the mountain of the "burning star"—more than three miles above the ocean level. My face is turned to the east, and I look downward. The snow—the cincture of lichens and naked rocks—the dark belt of pines—the lighter foliage of the oaks—the fields of barley —the waving maize—the thickets of yucca and acacia-trees— the palm forest—the shore—the sea itself with its azure waves —all these at a single vision! From the summit of Orizava to the shores of the Mexican sea, I glance through every gradation of the thermal line. I am looking, as it were, from the pole to the equator!

I am alone. My brain is giddy. My pulse vibrates irregularly, and my heart beats with an audible distinctness. I am oppressed with a sense of my own nothingness—an atom, almost invisible, upon the breast of the mighty earth.

I gaze and listen. I see, but I hear not. Here is sight, but no sound. Around me reigns an awful stillness—the sublime silence of the Omnipotent, who alone is here.

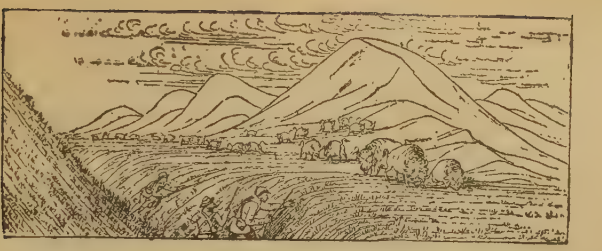
Hark! the silence is broken! Was it the rumbling of thunder? No. It was the crash of the falling avalanche. I

tremble at its voice. It is the voice of the Invisible—the whisper of a God! . . .

I tremble and worship.

* * * * * * *

Reader, could you thus stand upon the summit of Orizava, and look down to the shores of the Mexican Gulf, you would have before you, as on a map, the scene of our "adventures."



Hunting Buffalo on the Headwaters of the Missouri.

CHAPTER II.

AN ADVENTURE AMONG THE CREOLES OF NEW ORLEANS.

IN the "fall" of 1846, I found myself in the city of New Orleans, filling up one of those pauses that occur between the chapters of an eventful life—doing nothing. I have said an *eventful* life. In the retrospect of ten years, I could not remember as many weeks spent in one place. I had traversed the continent from north to south, and crossed it from sea to sea. My foot had pressed the summits of the Andes, and climbed the Cordillèras of the Sierra Madre. I had steamed it down the Mississippi, and sculled it up the Orinoco. I had hunted buffaloes with the Pawnees of the Platte, and ostriches upon the pampas of the Plata: to-day shivering in the hut of an Esquimaux—a month after, taking my *siesta* in an aery couch under the gossamer frondage of the corozo palm.

I had eaten raw meat with the trappers of the Rocky Mountains, and roast monkey among the Mosquito Indians; and much more, which might weary the reader, and ought to have made the writer a wiser man. But, I fear, the spirit of adventure—its thirst—is within me slakeless. I had just returned from a "scurry" among the Comanches of Western Texas, and the idea of "settling down" was as far from my mind as ever.

"I had eaten roast monkey among the Mosquito Indians."

"What next? what next?" thought I. "Ha! the war with Mexico."

The war between the United States and that country had now fairly commenced. My sword—a fine Toledo, taken from a Spanish officer at San Jacinto—hung over the mantel, rusting ingloriously. Near it were my pistols—a pair of Colt's revolvers—pointing at each other in sullen muteness. A warlike ardor seized upon me; and clutching, not the sword, but my pen, I wrote to the War Department for a commission; and, summoning all my patience, awaited the answer.

But I waited in vain. Every bulletin from Washington ex-

hibited its list of new-made officers, but my name appeared not among them. In New Orleans—that most patriotic of republican cities—epaulettes gleamed upon every shoulder, whilst I, with the anguish of a Tantalus, was compelled to look idly and enviously on. Despatches came in daily from the seat of war filled with newly-glorious names ; and steamers from the same quarter brought fresh batches of heroes—some legless, some armless, and others with a bullet-hole through the cheek, and perhaps the loss of a dozen teeth or so ; but all thickly covered with laurels.

November came, but no commission. Impatience and ennui had fairly mastered me. The time hung heavily upon my hands.

"How can I best pass the hour? I shall go to the French opera, and hear Calvé."

Such were my reflections as I sat one evening in my solitary chamber. In obedience to this impulse, I repaired to the theater ; but the bellicose strains of the opera, instead of soothing, only heightened my warlike enthusiasm, and I walked homeward, abusing, as I went, the president and the Secretary-at-War, and the whole government—legislative, judicial, and executive. "Republics *are* ungrateful," soliloquized I, in a spiteful mood. "I have 'surely put in strong enough' for it ; my political connections—besides, the government owes me a favor——"

"Cl'ar out, ye niggers! Dang yer! what de yer want?"

This was a voice that reached me as I passed through the dark corner of the Faubourg Tremé. Then followed some exclamations in French ; a scuffle ensued, a pistol went off, and I heard the same voice again calling out :

"Four till one! Injuns! Murder! Help, hyur!"

I ran up. It was very dark ; but the glimmer of a distant lamp enabled me to perceive a man out in the middle of the street, defending himself against four others. He was a man of giant size, and flourished a bright weapon, which I took

to be a bowie-knife, while his assailants struck at him on all sides with sticks and stilettoes. A small boy ran back and forth upon the banquette, calling for help.

Supposing it to be some street quarrel, I endeavored to separate the parties by remonstrance. I rushed between them holding out my cane ; but a sharp cut across the knuckles, which I had received from one of the small men, together with his evident intention to follow it up, robbed me of all zest for pacific meditation ; and, keeping my eye upon the one who had cut me, I drew a pistol (I could not otherwise defend myself), and fired. The man fell dead in his tracks, without a groan. His comrades, hearing me recock, took to their heels, and disappeared up a neighboring alley.

The whole scene did not occupy the time you have spent in reading this relation of it. One minute I was plodding quietly homeward ; the next, I stood in the middle of the street ; beside me a stranger of gigantic proportions ; at my feet a black mass of dead humanity, half doubled up in the mud as it had fallen ; on the banquette, the slight, shivering form of a boy ; while above and around were silence and darkness.

I was beginning to fancy the whole thing a dream, when the voice of the man at my side dispelled this illusion.

"Mister," said he, placing his arms akimbo, and facing me, "if ye'll tell me yur name, I ain't a-gwine to forgit it. No, Bob Linkin ain't that sorter."

"What! Bob Lincoln? Bob Lincoln of the Peaks?"

In the voice I had recognized a celebrated mountain trapper, and an old acquaintance, whom I had not met for several years.

"Why, I'll be scalped! it ain't you, Cap'n Haller? May I be dog-goned if it ain't! Whooray!—whoop! I knowed it warn't no storekeeper fired that shot. Haroo! whar are yur, Jack?"

"Here I am!" answered the boy, from the pavement.

"Kum hyur, then. Ye ain't badly skeert, air yur?"

"No," firmly responded the boy, crossing over.

"I tuk him from a scoundrelly Crow, thet I overhauled on a fork of the Yellerstone. He gin me a long pedigree; that is, afore I kilt the skunk. He made out as how his people hed tuk the boy from the Kimanches, who hed brought him from somewhar down the Grande. I know'd it wur all bamboozle. The boy's white—American white. Who ever seed a yeller-hided Mexikin with them eyes and ha'r? Jack, this hyur's Cap'n Haller. If yur kin iver save his life by givin' yur own, yur must do it, de ye hear?"

"I will," said the boy resolutely.

"Come, Lincoln," I interposed, "these conditions are not necessary. You remember I was in your debt."

"Ain't worth mentionin', cap; let bygones be bygones!"

"But what brought you to New Orleans? or, more particularly, how came you into this scrape?"

"Wal, cap'n, bein' as the last question is the most partickler, I'll gin yur the answer to it fust. I had jest twelve dollars in my pouch, an' I tuk a idee inter my head thet I mout as well double it. So I stepped into a shanty whar they wur a-playin' craps. After bettin' a good spell, I won somewhar about a hundred dollars. Not likin' the sign I seed about, I tuk Jack and put out. Wal, jest as I was kummin' roun' this hyur corner, four fellers—them ye seed—run out and jumped me, like so many catamounts. I tuk them for the same chaps I had seed parleyvooin' at the craps table; and tho't they were only jokin', till one of them gin me a sockdolloger over the head, an' fired a pistol. I then drewed my bowie, an' the skrimmage begun; an' thet's all I know about it, cap'n, more'n yurself.

"Let's see if it's all up with this'n," continued the hunter, stooping. "I'deed, yes," he drawled out; "dead as a buck. Thunder! ye've gin it him atween the eyes, plum! He *is*

one of the fellers, es my name's Bob Linkin. I kud sw'ar to them mowstaches among a million."

At this moment a patrol of night gendarmes came up; and Lincoln, and Jack, and myself were carried off to the calaboose, where we spent the remainder of the night. In the morning we were brought before the recorder; but I had taken the precaution to send for some friends, who introduced me to his worship in a proper manner. As my story corroborated Lincoln's, and his mine, and "Jack's" substantiated both; and as the comrades of the dead creole did not appear, and he himself was identified by the police as a notorious robber, the recorder dismissed the case as one of "justifiable homicide in self-defense;" and the hunter and I were permitted to go our way without further interruption.

GATHERING WILD RICE

CHAPTER III.

A VOLUNTEER RENDEZVOUS.

"NOW, Cap," said Lincoln, as we seated ourselves at the table of a café, "I'll answer t'other question yur put last night. I wur up on the head of Arkansaw, an' hearin' they wur raisin' volunteers down hyur, I kim down ter jine. It ain't often I trouble the settlements; but I've a mighty puncheon, as the Frenchmen says, to hev a crack at them yeller-bellies. I hain't forgot a mean trick they sarved me two yeern ago, up thar by Santer Fé."

"And so you have joined the volunteers?"

"That's sartin. But why ain't you a-gwine to Mexico? That 'ere's a wonder to me, cap, why you ain't. Thur's a mighty grist o' venturin', I heern; beats Injun fightin' all holler, an' yur jest the beaver I'd 'spect to find in that 'ar dam. Why don't you go?"

"So I purposed long since, and wrote on to Washington for a commission; but the government seems to have forgotten me."

"Dod rot the government! git a commission for yourself."

"How?" I asked.

"Jine us, an' be illected—thet's how."

This had crossed my mind before; but, believing myself a stranger among these volunteers, I had given up the idea. Once joined, he who failed in being elected an officer was fated to shoulder a firelock. It was a neck or nothing then. Lincoln set things in a new light. They were strangers to each other, he affirmed, and my chances of being elected would therefore be as good as any man's.

"I'll tell yur what it is," said he; "yur kin kum with me ter the rendevooz, an' see for yourself; but if ye'll only jine, an' licker freely, I'll lay a pack o' beaver agin the skin of a mink that they'll illect ye captain of the company."

"Even a lieutenancy," I interposed.

"Ne'er a bit of it, cap. Go the big figger. 'Tain't more nor yur entitled to. I kin git yur a good heist among some hunters thet's thur; but thar's a Buffalo drove o' them parleyvoos, an' a feller among 'em, one of those hyur creeholes, that's been a-showin' off and fencin' with a pair of skewers from mornin' till night. I'd be dog-gone glad to see the starch taken out o' that feller."

I took my resolution. In half an hour after I was standing in a large hall or armory. It was the rendezvous of the volunteers, nearly all of whom were present; and perhaps a more variegated assemblage was never grouped together. Every nationality seemed to have its representative; and for variety of language the company might have rivaled the masons of Babel.

Near the head of the room was a table, upon which lay a large parchment, covered with signatures. I added mine to the list. In the act I had staked my liberty. It was an oath.

"These are my rivals—the candidates for office," thought I, looking at a group who stood near the table. They were men of better appearance than the *οἱ πολλοι*. Some of them already affected a half-undress uniform, and most wore

forage-caps with glazed covers, and army buttons, over the ears.

"Ha! Clayley!" said I, recognizing an old acquaintance. This was a young cotton-planter—a free dashing spirit—who had sacrificed a fortune at the shrines of Momus and Bacchus.

"Why, Haller, old fellow! glad to see you. How have you been? Think of going with us?"

"Yes, I have signed. Who is that man?"

"He's a creole; his name is Dubrosc."

It was a face purely Norman, and one that would halt the wandering eye in any collection. Of oval outline, framed by a profusion of black hair, wavy and perfumed. A round black eye, spanned by brows arching and glossy. Whiskers that belonged rather to the chin, leaving bare the broad jawbone, expressive of firmness and resolve. Firm thin lips, handsomely mustached; when parted, displaying teeth well set and of dazzling whiteness. A face that might be called beautiful; and yet its beauty was of that negative order which we admire in the serpent and the pard. The smile was cynical; the eye cold, yet bright; but the brightness was altogether *animal*—more the light of instinct than intellect. A face that presented in its expression a strange admixture of the lovely and the hideous—physically fair, morally dark—beautiful, yet brutal!

From some undefinable cause, I at once conceived for this man a strange feeling of dislike. It was he of whom Lincoln had spoken, and who was likely to be my rival for the captaincy. Was it this that rendered him repulsive? No. There was a cause beyond. In him I recognized one of those abandoned natures who shrink from all honest labor, and live upon the sacrificial fondness of some weak being who has been enslaved by their personal attractions. There are many such. I have met them in the *jardins* of Paris; in the *casinos* of London; in the cafés of Havana, and the "quadroon" balls of New Orleans—everywhere in the

crowded haunts of the world. I have met them with an instinct of loathing—an instinct of antagonism.

"The fellow is likely to be our captain," whispered Clayley, noticing that I observed the man with more than ordinary attention. "By the way," continued he, "I don't half like it. I believe he's an infernal scoundrel."

"Such are *my* impressions. But if that be his character, how can he be elected

"Oh! no one here knows another; and this fellow is a splendid swordsman, like all the creoles, you know. He has used the trick to advantage, and has created an impression. By the bye, now I recollect, you are no slouch at that yourself. What are you up for?"

"Captain," I replied.

"Good! Then we must go the 'whole hog' in your favor. I have put in for the first lieutenancy, so we won't run foul of each other. Let us 'hitch teams.'"

"With all my heart," said I.

"You came in with that long-bearded hunter. Is he your friend?"

"He is."

"Then I can tell you that among these fellows he's a "whole team, and a cross dog under the wagon" to boot. See him! he's at it already."

I had noticed Lincoln in conversation with several leather-legging gentry like himself, whom I knew from their costume and appearance to be backwoodsmen. All at once these saturnine characters commenced moving about the room, and entering into conversation with men whom they had not hitherto deigned to notice.

"They are canvassing," said Clayley.

Lincoln, brushing past, whispered in my ear, "Cap'n, I understan' these hyur critters better 'n you kin. Yer must mix among 'em—mix and licker—thet's the idee.

"Good advice," said Clayley; but if you could only take

the shine out of that fellow at fencing, the thing's done at once. By Jove! I think you might do it, Haller!"

"I have made up my mind to try, at all events."

"Not until the last day—a few hours before the election."

"You are right. It would be better to wait—I shall take your advice. In the meantime let us follow that of Lincoln —'mix and licker.'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Clayley; "let us come, boys!" he added, turning to a very thirsty-looking group, "let's all take a 'smile.' Here, *Captain* Haller! allow me to introduce you;" and the next moment I was introduced to a crowd of very seedy-looking gentlemen, and the moment after we were clinking glasses, and chatting as familiarly as if we had been friends of forty years standing.

* * * * * * *

During the next three days the enrolment continued, and the canvass was kept up with energy. The election was to take place on the evening of the fourth.

Meanwhile my dislike for my rival had been strengthened by closer observation; and, as is general in such cases, the feeling was reciprocal.

On the afternoon of the day in question we stood before each other, foil in hand, both of us nerved by an intense though as yet *unspoken*, enmity. This had been observed by most of the spectators, who approached and formed a circle around us; all of them highly interested in the result —which, they knew, would be an index to the election.

The room was an armory, and all kinds of weapons for military practise were kept in it. Each had helped himself to his foil. One of the weapons was without a button, and sharp enough to be dangerous in the hands of an angry man. I noticed that my antagonist had chosen this one.

"Your foil is not in order; it has lost the button, has it not?" I observed.

"Ah! monsieur, pardon. I did not perceive that."

"A strange oversight," muttered Clayley, with a significant glance.

The Frenchman returned the imperfect foil, and took another.

"Have you a choice, monsieur?" I inquired.

"No, thank you; I am satisfied."

By this time every person in the rendezvous had come up, and waited with breathless anxiety. We stood face to face, more like two men about to engage in a deadly duel than a pair of amateurs with blunt foils. My antagonist was evidently a practised swordsman. I could see that as he came to guard. As for myself, the small-sword exercise had been a foible of my college days, and for years I had not met my match at it; but just then I was out of practise.

We commenced unsteadily. Both were excited by unusual emotions, and our first thrusts were neither skilfully aimed nor parried. We fenced with the energy of anger, and the sparks crackled from the friction of the grazing steel. For several minutes it was a doubtful contest; but I grew cooler every instant, while a slight advantage I had gained irritated my adversary. At length, by a lucky hit, I succeeded in planting the button of my foil upon his cheek. A cheer greeted this, and I could hear the voice of Lincoln shouting out:

"Wal done, cap'n! whooray for the mountain-men!"

This added to the exasperation of the Frenchman, causing him to strike wilder than before; and I found no difficulty in repeating my former thrust. It was now a sure hit; and after a few passes I thrust my adversary for the third time, drawing blood. The cheer rang out louder than before. The Frenchman could no longer conceal his mortification; and, grasping his foil in both hands, he snapped it over his knee, with an oath. Then, muttering some word about "better weapons" and "another opportunity," he strode off among the spectators.

Two hours after the combat I was his captain. Clayley was elected first lieutenant; and in a week from that time the company was "mustered" into the service of the United States government, and armed and equipped as an independent corps of Rifle Rangers. On the 20th of January, 1847, a noble ship was bearing us over the blue water, toward the shores of a hostile land.

Flying-fish of the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE ON THE ISLAND OF LOBOS.

AFTER calling at Brazos Santiago, we were ordered to land upon the island of Lobos, fifty miles north of Vera Cruz. This was to be our "drill rendezvous." We soon reached the island. Detachments from several regiments debarked together; the jungle was attacked; and in a few hours the green grove had disappeared, and in its place stood the white pyramids of canvas with their floating flags. It was the work of a day. When the sun rose over Lobos it was a desert isle, thickly covered with a jungle of mangrove, manzanel, and icaco-trees, green as an emerald. How changed the scene! When the moon looked down upon this same islet it seemed as if a warlike city had sprung suddenly out of the sea, with a navy at anchor in front of its bannered walls!

In a few days six full regiments had encamped upon the

hitherto uninhabited island, and nothing was heard but the voice of war.

These regiments were all "raw"; and my duty, with others, consisted in "licking them into shape." It was drill, drill, from morning till night; and, by early tattoo, I was always glad to crawl into my tent and go to sleep—such sleep as a man can get among scorpions, lizards, and soldier-crabs; for the little islet seemed to have within its boundaries a specimen of every reptile that came safely out of the ark.

The 22d of February being Washington's birthday, I could not get to bed as usual. I was compelled to accept an invitation, obtained by Clayley, to the tent of Major Twing, where they were—using Clayley's own words—"to have a night of it."

After tattoo we set out for the major's marquee, which lay near the center of the islet, in a coppice of caoutchouc-trees. We had no difficulty in finding it, guided by the jingling of glasses and the mingling of many voices in boisterous laughter.

As we came near, we could perceive that the marquee, had been enlarged by the tucking the flaps in front, with the addition of a fly stretched over an extra ridge-pole. Several pieces of rough plank, spirited away from the ships, resting upon empty bread-barrels, formed the table. Upon this might be recognized every variety of bottles, glasses, and cups. Open boxes of sardines, piles of ship-biscuits, and segments of cheese, filled the intervening spaces. Freshly-drawn corks and glistening fragments of lead were strewed around, while a number of dark conical objects under the table told that not a few champagne bottles were already "down among the dead men."

On each side of the table was a row of colonels, captains, subalterns, and doctors seated without regard to rank or age, according to the order in which they had "dropped

in." There were also some naval officers, and a sprinkling of strange, half-sailor-looking men, the skippers of transport brigs, steamboats, etc.; for Twing was a thorough republican in his entertainments; besides, the *day* leveled all distinctions.

At the head of the table was the major himself—one of those wiry, hard-headed, hard-drinking devils, who always carried a large pewter flask suspended from his shoulders by a green string; and without this flask no one ever saw Major Twing. He could not have stuck to it more closely had it been his badge of rank. It was not unusual, on the route, to hear some wearied officer exclaim: "If I only had a pull at old Twing's pewter!" and "equal to Twing's flask" was an expression which stamped the quality of any liquor as superfine. Such was one of the major's peculiarities, though by no means the only one.

As my friend and I made our appearance under the fly, the company was in high glee, everyone enjoying himself with that freedom from restraint of rank peculiar to the American army-service. Clayley was a great favorite with the major, and at once caught his eye.

"Ha, Clayley! that you? Walk in with your friend. Find seats there, gentlemen."

"Captain Haller—Major Twing," said Clayley, introducing me.

"Happy to know you, captain. Can you find seats there? No. Come up this way. Cudjo, boy! run over to Colonel Marshall's tent, and steal a couple of stools. Adge! twist the neck off that bottle. Where's the screw? Hang that screw? Where is it anyhow?"

"Never mind the screw, mage," cried the adjutant; I've got a patent universal here." So saying, this gentleman held out a champagne bottle in his left hand, and with a down-stroke of his right cut the neck off, as square as if it had been filed!

"Nate!" ejaculated Hennessy, an Irish officer, who sat near the head of the table and who evidently admired that sort of thing.

"What we call a Kentucky corkscrew," said the adjutant coolly. "It offers a double advantage. It saves time, and you get the wine clear of——"

"My respects, gentlemen! Captain Haller—Mr. Clayley."

"Thank you, Major Twing. To you, sir."

"Ha! the stools at last! Only one! What the deuce, Cudjo! Come, gentlemen, squeeze yourselves up this way. Here, Clayley, old boy; here's a cartridge box. Adge! up-end that box. So—give us your fist, old fellow; how are you? Sit down, captain; sit down. Cigars, there!"

As soon as we had got seated, several voices were heard vociferating, "The song! the song! round with the song!" and I learnt that the order of the night was "a song, a story, or half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"Sibley's turn next!" shouted one.

"Sibley! Sibley!" cried several voices.

"Well, gentlemen," said the officer called upon, a young South Carolinian, "as I make no pretensions to singing, I will endeavor to clear the forfeit by a story."

"Good! a story, by all means—nothing like variety."

"Liftinant, take a trifle of the squeezed lemon before ye begin."

"Thank you, Captain Hennessy. Your health, sir!"

Tortoise and Rattlesnake, Isle of Lobos.

CHAPTER V.

LIEUTENANT SIBLEY'S STORY OF A GEORGIA HOTEL.

WELL, gentlemen, about six months ago I had occasion to make a journey to Pensacola on horseback. My road from South Carolina, of course, lay through the State of Georgia.

"It is well known, gentlemen, that there are large tracts in the territory of our southern neighbor that have proved very ungrateful to the labors of the husbandman. These districts are, in consequence, but sparsely settled, and ill-provided with the necessaries of life."

Here the lieutenant looked significantly towards the major, who was a thoroughbred Georgian.

"On the third day of my journey I had ridden about

twenty miles through one of these tracts—a dry pine barren —without having caught the first glimpse of a human habitation. I was faint with hunger and thirst; so was my horse, who stretched out his neck and moaned piteously, as each new, and apparently illimitable, prospect of the hot, sandy road opened before us. There was no help for it, however; so we jogged on painfully—both of us keeping a sharp look ahead. You cannot fancy my delight when, on turning a corner, I saw before me a large and substantial log house, with a pine mast stuck up before the door, and a broad swinging sign, upon which was legible, in bold characters, the word 'Hotel.'

"I rubbed my eyes, and then shaded them with my hand, to make sure it was not the *mirage*, which frequently makes its appearance upon these sandy plains. But, no; it was a house, and, better still, a hotel.

"I straightened myself in the saddle. My horse whinnied and stepped out cheerily. "Come," said I, patting him on the neck, "we're through it at last, old fellow; you'll soon be up to your ears in the best of Georgia corn, and I—" Here the anticipated enjoyment of ham and eggs, fried chicken, strong coffee, hot biscuit and waffles, deprived me of the power of speech, and I rode up to the "hotel" in silence.

"As I got nearer the house, it began to look weather-beaten and desolate-like, and I was growing fearful that it might be uninhabited; but, no—there sat the landlord in the porch, and his two sons. "It's all right," thought I; so I rode up, and drew bridle in front of the door.

"So far, the three individuals whom I had observed in the porch—three sallow, dry-looking chaps, in their shirt-sleeves—had not moved an inch. I am not certain that they even changed the direction of their eyes. A couple of gaunt, yellow dogs, that lay on the stoop, remained equally motionless.

"'Come,' thought I, 'this is cool for people who keep a house of entertainment. They ought to know from the direction in which I have come, that I must be both hungry and tired, and likely to put up for the night. They might offer to take one's horse, I should think.' But no one stirred.

"I began to suspect that, after all, the house might *not* be a tavern, as I had at first supposed; and I again looked up at the sign. Enough—the word 'Hotel' was there in large letters.

"'Can I stop here for the night?' I inquired at length.

"I waited for an answer, but none came. I repeated the question in a louder and more imperious tone.

"'You kin if yer like, stren-ger,' replied the oldest of the three, but without moving a muscle except those of his mouth.

"'Have you got any corn?' I inquired, intending to make sure of something for my horse before alighting, as the house, on a nearer inspection, looked naked and empty.

"'Got any corn?' echoed the same speaker as before.

"'Yes,' said I, 'corn.'

"'No, we hain't got any,' was the reply.

"'Well, have you got any fodder, then?'

"'Got any fodder?'

"'Yes—fodder.'

"'No, we hain't got any.'

"'This is bad,' thought I; 'my poor horse—I will have to turn him loose, and I might as well tie him up for that matter.' I continued to soliloquize, as, on looking around, I could not see a blade of grass within the circuit of a mile! 'I had best hitch him to the post, take a hurried snack myself, and then ride on to the next house; but first let me see what they can give me to eat.'

"All the time I was occupied with these reflections the three men remained silent and motionless, except when one

or the other of them would bring his hand down with a smart slap over his cheek, or along his thigh, or behind his ear, as though one and all of them were afflicted with the malady of St. Vitus.

"I was at first startled by these demonstrations; but upon further observation I perceived that my saturnine friends were only killing mosquitoes!

"'Have you got any ham and eggs?" I asked after a pause.

"'Got any ham and eggs?' echoed the original speaker, with an emphasis that clearly betokened surprise.

"'Yes—ham and eggs,' repeated I.

"'No, we hain't got any.'

"'A pity; I am fond of ham and eggs. Have you any chickens, then?'

"'Chickens?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'chickens.'

"'No, we hain't got any chickens—nery chicken.'

"'Well, have you got any meat?'

"'Got any meat?'

"'Yes—any sort of meat—beef, pork, mutton, or veal. I'm not particular—I'm hungry.'

"'No, we hain't got any.'

"'Have you any bread, then?'

"'Any bread?'

"'Yes—bread—a piece of bread and a glass of water. That to a hungry man is a banquet.'

"'No, we hain't got no bread.'

"'Well, my friend, have you got anything to eat of any kind?'

"'Anything to eat of any kind?'

"'Yes, anything. I'm as hungry as a wolf.'

"'No, we hain't got nothing to eat of any kind—nery thing.'

"'Can you give my horse some water, and I'll ride on?'

"'We hain't none drawed, stren-ger; but the crick ain't more'n a kupple o' miles ahead—yer kin git water thar.'

"'Good gracious!' I ejaculated, involuntarily; 'no meat, no bread, no corn, no water, no nothing! Look here, old fellow! will you tell me how in thunder you do here, anyhow?'

"Not at all put out by the question, the old chap looked up sideways, and replied:

"'*Very well, I thank ye, stren-ger; how de yer deo yourself?*'

"I gave a violent wrench at the bridle, which brought my horse round like a pivot; and digging the spurs into his sides, I headed him at the road. But the poor beast did not need any driving; for, whether he had been satisfied by his own inspection of the place, or whether he had understood the conversation, he broke into a sort of despairing gallop, and did not stop until we had reached the top of a long hill. Here I had the curiosity to turn round in the saddle and look back; and, to my astonishment, the three men were *still seated just as I had left them;* and I really believe that they are sitting there to this day! Captain Hennessy, I'll trouble you again."

"With all the pleasure of life—here's at you, liftinant!"

"Fill up, gentlemen! Fill up!" shouted the sharp, hard voice of the major, as soon as the laughter had subsided; "fill up—there's a basket left."

"Ay, and when that's through, Old Blowhard here has another stowed away in the lockers of his steamer."

"Ay, a dozen of 'em for such a day as this," said the transport master, who was known among the offcers at Lobos as "Old Blowhard."

"Speaking of the day, allow me, gentlemen, to propose a sentiment, which until now, we have by some accident overlooked."

This came from a tall gray-haired officer of venerable aspect.

"Sentiment from Colonel Harding!"

"Colonel Harding's sentiment!"

"Fill up for the colonel's toast; pass that champagne."

"*The memory of the immortal man whose birthday we celebrate.*"

This toast was drunk standing—all heads uncovered—and in perfect silence. The riot that rang but a moment ago through the crowded canvas was hushed, out of respect for the memory of the illustrious dead. The silence was only momentary. Like waves for awhile baffled, and back returning, the sounds of revelry again broke forth. Above the din of conversation, several voices were heard vociferating—

"A story from Twing. A back-hit from Georgia!"

"Well, gentlemen," responded the major, "I'm ready as soon as you have all filled; I don't like to be interrupted."

"Fill up, gentlemen!" continued he. "Adge, out with some corks! Cudjo, where's the screw? Hang that screw! I believe it's sunk into the sand; look out for your purses, gentlemen; if you drop them here, they're gone. I've lost several valuable articles in this cussed sandhole."

"Mine is as low as it can possibly get," cried a voice.

"Never mind that screw, mage," said Hillis, the adjutant, who by this time had broken—Kentucky fashion—the necks of several bottles, and was pouring out their foaming contents.

"Now, gentlemen," cried the major, after swallowing a glass of champagne, "I'm at your service."

Silence was at once re-established, and the whole company sat eying their host with interested looks. The major was well known to be a sharp hand—a regular "Georgia Yankee"—and every one expected to hear the South Carolinian receive a Roland for his Oliver. The Georgian began.

Brain Corals of the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER VI.

MAJOR TWING'S STORY OF THE GUYAS-CUTIS.

"MINE, gentlemen, is also a traveling story:" here the major looked significantly towards Sibley.

"Many long years ago, when I was a wild young man, I was journeying to the city of Washington in company with a friend—a Georgian boy like myself. We went, as thousands have gone before and since, to try our luck at office hunting. You are all well aware, gentlemen, that the road from Georgia to Washington passes through the Palmetto State; a state distinguished for the fertility of its soil, as well as for the wealth, chivalry, and intelligence of its sons." Here the major winked knowingly at the company with one eye, while he kept the other fixed upon the South Carolinian.

"I thought myself a smart traveler, gentlemen; but, compared with my companion, I was as green as a blade of

spring grass. He was naturally sharp, but experience had polished his wits to the keenness of a cambric needle. His name was Cobb—Wiley Cobb.

"We started from home on a capital of three hundred dollars. It was all we could rake together. But we had a couple of stout Georgia ponies; and this, we concluded, would be enough to put us through to Washington and back.

"'If we're stumped,' said Cobb, 'we can sell the cattle.'

"Unfortunately, before entering the Palmetto State, it was our luck to pass through the town of Augusta, on the Georgia side, where we halted to feed. Augusta had always been considered 'a brisk little place.' We found it so. Not being in a great hurry, we remained over night and the next day. We had fallen in with some very agreeable acquaintances. We got to playing first at ninepenny *poker;* then quarter-dollar *loo;* then *brag;* and finally, our Augusta friends introduced us to the interesting game of *faro.* We played all night; and by daybreak on the morning of the second day had deposited our three hundred dollars in the 'bank,' where they remained.

"'What's to be done?' said I.

"'I'm thinking," answered Cobb.

"'Sell the ponies and start back?' suggested I.

"'No such thing!' sharply responded Cobb.

"'What better can we do?' I asked. 'We have no money—we can't go on to Washington—what can we do but slope home again?"

"'What have you got in your saddle-bags?' inquired my friend, without heeding my last interrogatory.

"'A shirt, a pair of pistols, a plug of tobacco, and a bowie,' was my reply.

"'We must sell the bowie first,' said Cobb; it "will pay our tavern bill, and get us out of this infernal hole.'

"'And what next? On to Washington?' I inquired.

"'Of course,' said Cobb; 'we would look wise turning back: we would be the standing joke of the county,' added he.

"'But how can we travel without funds?' I asked.

"'That we shall have to find out,' said Cobb, with a look as cheerful and happy as if he had had relays and horses all along to Washington, and his bill paid at every tavern upon the road.

"'I have an acquaintance,' continued he, 'at the end of the first stage from here; we can stop all night with him —that won't cost anything; beyond that, we must trust to the hospitality of the planters. I think we can get through South Carolina handsomely; good, generous fellows the South Carolinians.'" Here the major again looked significantly across the table. "'The danger is, we may stick in Turpentine State. We must travel through it on the proceeds of your pistols. But come, let us first dispose of the bowie, and get out of this sharpers' nest.'

"As Cobb was my senior, and, in my estimation, a great genius, I of course acquiesced. He sold the bowie-knife to one of our gambling friends for six dollars; the tavern bill was liquidated, leaving a few shillings in our joint purse; and with this we took the road through South Carolina.

"At the end of the first day we stopped with Cobb's friend, and were hospitably entertained. Cobb felt a strong inclination to borrow from him, but could not bring himself to confess the cause of our being without funds.

"We left his friend's house therefore, after an excellent breakfast, our horses well fed and curried, but without any increase of our finances. On the contrary, we had given a quarter-dollar to the 'darkie' who had saddled our ponies.

"We were now fairly *en route*—traveling through, to both of us, a *terra incognita*.

"That night we stopped at a planter's house. I do not know what Cobb told the planter as we were preparing to

leave in the morning ; but I heard the latter remark somewhat sneeringly as we got into our saddles, ' It ain't usual for folks to travel through these parts without money,' and then there was a half-stifled, angry-like ejaculation, followed by a hissing through his teeth of words which would have sounded badly in polite ears.

" ' Rather an inhospitable sort of a chap,' whispered I as we rode off.

" ' Deuced inhospitable ! ' said Cobb ; ' especially for a South Carolinian. But he's an exception, I guess.'

" And he *was* an exception ; for the next place we stopped at, they turned to and blackguarded us outright, calling us ' impostors.' and ' Georgia Yankees ' ; and the next after that, the landlord of the house, which was a country tavern, threatened to levy upon our saddle-bags. This he certainly would have done, had not Cobb told him very significantly that ' they contained only a pair of pistols that were loaded, and might go off.' Saying this, Cobb took out the pistols, and handed one of them to me ; then cocking his own, he told the landlord he ' might have the saddle-bags now, as they were empty.'

" But Cobb was a boy of six feet two in his stockings, with a pair of fierce whiskers, and an eye as black as a coal ; and the landlord concluded to let the bags hang where they were ; so we leaped into our saddles and rode off.

" ' This will never do, Harry,' said Cobb as we jogged leisurely along.

" ' Never,' said I.

" We must hit upon some plan to raise the wind,' continued he.

" ' I wish we could,' said I.

" ' Think of something,' said he.

" ' I'll try," said I ; and I commenced turning over in my mind every plan I could think of that would be likely to relieve us from our difficulty.

"But 'raising the wind' by the mere process of thought is an achievement which has puzzled sharper intellects than mine; and I was about abandoning the twentieth project that had offered itself to my mind, when Cobb, who was riding some distance in advance, suddenly checked his horse, and, wheeling round in the saddle, with a triumphant gesture, shouted out:

"'Harry, I have it!'

"'Good!' cried I.

"'I've treed the varmint!' continued he.

"'You have?' said I.

"'Like a knife!' said he.

"'I am glad of it,' said I; 'but how?'

"'Never mind; I'll tell you at night. I haven't got the thing straightened out yet. How far do you suppose we are from Columbia?' inquired he.

"'About twenty miles, I should think. We have come five, and they said it was twenty-five from the tavern.'

"'Well, then, ride slowly,' said Cobb. 'We must not get there before dark. What sized place is it?'

"'I haven't an idea,' replied I. 'It ought to be a good chunk of a place, though—it's the state capital.

"'So it is—you're right—it'll do,' said he; and we rode on in silence, Cobb buried in profound meditation, maturing his plans, and I dying with curiosity to know them.

"About half an hour after dark we entered the town, and rode up the streets; Cobb looked inquiringly into the different stores as we passed.

"'Here's the very thing!' ejaculated he, pulling up in front of a shoe-shop and getting off his horse.

"He entered the shop. I could see by his gesticulations to the owner of the establishment that he was in treaty for a large empty shoe-box which stood in the middle of the store. All that I could hear was the following:

"'After you have made the hole, you may nail down the lid, and paint the letters upon it. Here they are.'

"Saying this, he took up a scrap of paper, and, after writing some words upon it, handed it to the storekeeper.

"'I'll send a dray for it in half an hour,' continued he, as he paid for the box; and, bidding the man good night, came out and got into his saddle again. We then continued our way to the principal hotel of the place, where we drew up and dismounted.

"'I'll be back in an hour, Harry,' said Cobb, throwing me his bridle; 'in the mean time take your supper, engage a snug room, and wait for me. *Don't register till I come*—I'll attend to that.' So saying, he disappeared down the street.

"Agreeably to his instructions, I did not register our names; but, as the supper-gong rang before Cobb's return, I walked into the room and ate supper—heartily, too, for I had not tasted victuals since morning. I was then shown to my room, where I waited patiently for the appearance of my friend. I was still conjecturing how the supper was to be paid for, when the door opened and Cobb entered. He was not alone. A couple of 'darkies' followed at his heels, carrying the box that I had seen him purchase, upon the lid of which was now painted in large, bold letters:

"'THE WONDERFUL GUYAS-CUTIS!'

Underneath was an oblong hole, or slit, newly chiseled in the wood.

"Cobb held in his hand a broad sheet of paper. This, as soon as the darkies had gone out of the room, he spread upon the table, and, pointing to it, triumphantly exclaimed—

"'There, now, Harry: that's it!'

"'*It?* what *it?*' asked I.

"'Read for yourself, old fellow!' cried he.

"I commenced reading:

"'THE WONDERFUL GUYAS-CUTIS!

"'*Caught in the Wilds of Oregon! near the center boundary of* 54° 40′ !!'

"This was in large capitals. Then followed the description in smaller letters:

"'This remarkable animal, hitherto unknown to the naturalists, possesses all the intelligence of the human, combined with the ferocity of the tiger, and the agility of the ourang-outang! He is of a bright sky-blue color, with eleven stripes upon his body, and one more round his nose, which makes the even dozen; and ne'er a one of them alike!!

"'In his rage, he has been known to carry Indians up to the tops of the highest trees, and there leave them to perish with hunger, thirst, and cold; which accounts satisfactorily for the uncivilized nature of the red man!!

"'The highly-intelligent citizens of Columbia are respectfully informed that this wonderful quadruped has arrived among them, and will be exhibited this evening, Tuesday, at the Minerva Rooms, at the hour of eight o'clock. Admittance, 25 cents!'

"'But, my dear Wiley,' said I, now, for the first time, catching the idea of Cobb's project, 'you don't intend——,

"'But I *do*, though,' interrupted he; 'and I will—that's as certain as my name's Wiley Cobb, of the State of Georgy.'

"'But you do not really think you can gull the intelligent people—?'

"'Bah! intelligent people! It's plain, Harry, you don't know the world,' said Cobb contemptuously.

"'And what part do you expect *me* to take in the play?' I asked.

"'Nothing but to keep in this room to-morrow, and see that nobody peeps into that box."

"'But at night?'

"'At night you will stand at the door of the Minerva Rooms, take the money, and, when you hear me groan and shake the chain, run in behind the screen—that's all.'

"Beginning to look upon the thing as a good joke, I promised faithfully to follow Cobb's instructions; not without some disagreeable anticipations that both he and I would spend the following night in the Columbia jail.

"Next morning Cobb was up at an early hour: and, after moaning piteously, and groaning in the most hideous and frightful manner, and talking at intervals into the box, as—'Be still, Guy!' 'Down, Guy! down!'—he left the room, bidding me keep a sharp look-out.

"As soon as he had gone I heard a considerable shuffling and whispering outside the door; and presently a darkie looked in, and asked me if I wanted anything.

"'Not anything,' said I; 'don't come in!'

"The darkie drew back his head with a look of terror, and pulled the door to behind him.

"Shortly after, the whispering recommenced and the door again opened. This time it was the landlord of the hotel, whose curiosity had brought him up to 'see the elephant.'

"'It's a tarnation'd fierce critter that," said he, putting his head inside the door, but still holding on to the handle.

"'Dreadful!' said I.

"'Could I not have a peep?' inquired he.

"'It's against the rules,' answered I; 'besides, a stranger makes him savage.'

"'Oh, it does! does it?' said he apologizingly.

"'Terrible!' said I.

"'You'll have a good house, I think,' said he, after a short pause.

"'I hope so,' said I.

"'The bills is out. Mr. Van Amburgh was about putty early this mornin'.'

"'Mr. Van Amburgh?' interrogated I.

"'Yes; Mr. Van Amburgh—your partner.'

"'Oh yes! Mr. Van Amburgh, my partner," I chimed in,

as I saw that this must be an *alias* of my friend Cobb. 'But Mr. Van Amburgh did not put out the bills himself?'

"I said this to lead the landlord's thoughts upon a new trail, and cover the mistake I had made.

"'Oh—no; of course not,' replied he; 'he hired a boy.'

"'Certainly—that was right,' I added.

"'Breakfast 'll be ready in a minute; ye'll come down?'

"'Oh, of course.'

"At this, Boniface took himself off, to my great satisfaction.

"Cobb now returned, bringing with him about six feet of a log-chain, done up in paper.

"After repeating his groaning and growling we descended to breakfast—Cobb having first carefully locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"We were evidently objects of great interest at the breakfast-table—Cobb calling me 'Mr. Wolfe,' and I addressing him as 'Mr. Van Amburgh.' The servants waited upon us with delighted attention.

"After breakfast we returned to the room, when Cobb again went through his groaning rehearsal, and shortly after left me.

"The groaning he repeated at intervals during the day; upon each succeeding occasion louder and more terrific than before.

"Night came at length; and with our box, covered up in one of the landlord's bed-quilts, we started for the Minerva Rooms, which I found already fitted up with a running screen, and brilliantly lighted with candles. Cobb had the box and chain carried behind the screen, while I remained at the door to look after the *treasury*. We had no tickets, each one paying his or her 'quarter,' and passing in.

"In a short time the room was full of ladies, gentlemen, and children; tradesmen and their wives; merchants and their families; young bucks and their sweethearts, and even

a number of the intelligent members of the state assembly! Expectation was on tiptoe to see the 'Wonderful Guyas-cutis.'

"At length a low moaning was heard behind the screen.

"'Down, Guy! down! Still, dog, still!' cried a voice in hoarse, commanding accents.

"The people had now all arrived, and began to stamp and clap their hands, and exhibit the usual symptoms of impatience, crying out at intervals, 'The Guyas-cutis! the Guyas-cutis!'

"'Bring him out, Mr. Showman! trot him out!'

"'Let us see the savage varmint!'

"The Guyas-cutis growled fearfully.

"'Give him a bone!' cried one.

"'Go it, old fifty-four forty!' exclaimed another.

"'The whole or none!' shouted a third.

"'Fifty-four forty, or fight!' cried a fourth.

"'Go it, old K. Polk!' from a distant part of the room.

"At this the audience became convulsed with laughter. The groaning grew louder and more terrible, and Cobb's voice was heard in hoarse accents apostrophizing the Guyas-cutis. Then was heard a struggle behind the screen, followed by the rattling of a chain.

"This was my cue. Putting on a look of terror—as I had been instructed by Cobb—I rushed up the open space between the spectators, and pushed in behind the curtain. I stole a glance backward as I entered, and saw that the audience had already caught the alarm. Some of the people had risen to their feet, and stood pale and trembling! Behind the screen, Cobb was running to and fro, scraping the sanded floor, rattling the chain, and chiding an imaginary object in the most threatening accents. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and streams of what appeared to be blood were running over his face, neck, and bosom!

"'Down, savage, down!' cried Cobb.

"'Boo-boo! bow-wow! growled the Guyas-cutis.

"'Oh, Mr. Wolfe!' cried Cobb; 'come here, help, help, or he'll be off!'

"'Hold on to him!' shouted I, in a loud voice, 'hold on!'

"'Bow-oow! wow-awow!" roared the Guyas-cutis.

"'Help! help!' cried Cobb.

"'Hold on!' shouted I.

"At this moment Cobb seized the chain in both hands, and, after giving it a fierce rattle, rushed in front of the screen, shouting in a voice of thunder:

"'*Save yourselves, gentlemen! Save your wives and children! The Guyas-cutis is loose!*

"Gentlemen," said the major, drawing a long breath, "it's more than I can do to describe the scene that followed. In less than two minutes the room was empty; and when Cobb and myself reached the street, there was not a soul—man, woman, or child—to be seen! We hurried to the hotel, and ordered our horses to be saddled with all despatch—Cobb telling the landlord that the Guyas-cutis had taken to the fields, and we must pursue him on horseback. While our horses were being saddled, we settled the landlord's bill out of our newly acquired funds. Starting at a brisk gallop, we did not draw bridle until we had put twenty miles between us and the good city of Columbia. Then we halted, and counted our receipts, which amounted to—how much, Mr. Cobb.

"Sixty-six dollars seventy-five cents, to a figger," said a tall, swarthy personage, who sat some way down the table, and whose dark, saturnine countenance would never have betrayed him as the hero of the story; but it was he indeed; and peals of laughter followed the discovery.

* * * * * * *

"To the major, the major and his story!" shouted several voices.

At that moment the report of a musket was heard without

the tent, and simultaneously a bullet whistled through the canvas. It knocked the foraging-cap from the head of Captain Hennessy, and, striking a decanter, shivered the glass into a thousand pieces!

"A divilish nate shot that, I don't care who fired it," said Hennessy, coolly picking up his cap. "An inch of a miss —good as a mile," added he, thrusting his thumb into the bullet-hole.

By this time every officer present was upon his feet, most of them rushing towards the front of the marquee. A dozen voices called out together:

"Who fired that gun?"

There was no answer, and several plunged into the thicket in pursuit. The chapparal was dark and silent, and these returned after a fruitless search.

"Some soldier, whose musket has gone off by accident," suggested Colonel Harding. "The fellow has run away, to avoid being put under arrest."

"Come, gentlemen, take your sates again," said Hennessy; "let the poor divil slide—yez may be thankful it wasn't a shell."

"You, captain, have most cause to be grateful for the character of the missile."

"By my sowl, I don't know about that!—a shell or a twenty-four would have grazed me all the same; but a big shot would have been mighty inconvanient to the head of my friend Haller, here!"

This was true. My head was nearly in range; and, had the shot been a large one, it would have struck me upon the left temple. As it was, I felt the "wind" of the bullet and already began to suffer a painful sensation over the eye.

"I'm mighty curious to know which of us the fellow has missed, captain," said Hennessy, turning to me as he spoke.

"If it were not a 'bull' I should say I hope neither of

us. I'm inclined to think with Colonel Harding that it was altogether an accident."

"By the powers! an ugly accident, too, that has spoiled five dollars' worth of an illigant cap, and a pint of as good brandy as ever was mixed with hot water and lemon-juice."

"Plenty left, captain," cried the major. "Come, gentlemen, don't let this damp us; fill up! fill up! Adge, out with the corks! Cudjo, where's the screw?—confound that screw!"

"Never mind the screw, mage," cried the adjutant, repeating his old trick upon the neck of a fresh bottle, which, nipped off under the wire, fell upon a heap of others that had preceded it.

And the wine again foamed and sparkled, and glasses circled round, and the noisy revelry waxed as loud as ever. The incident of the shot was soon forgotten. Songs were sung, and stories told, and toasts drunk; and with song and sentiment, and toast and story, and the wild excitement of wit and wine, the night waned away. With many of those young hearts, bold with hope and burning with ambition, it was the last "Twenty-second" they would ever celebrate. Half of them never hailed another.

CHAPTER VII.

A SKELETON ADVENTURE.

IT was past midnight when I withdrew from the scene of wassail. Clayley was one of those tireless spirits who could "drink all night till broad daylight;" and, as he preferred remaining for some time longer, I walked out alone. My blood was flushed and I strolled down upon the beach, to enjoy the cool fresh breeze that was blowing in from the Mexican Sea.

The scene before me was one of picturesque grandeur, and I paused a moment to gaze upon it. The wine even heightened its loveliness to an illusion.

The full round moon of the tropics was sweeping over a sky of cloudless blue. The stars were eclipsed and scarcely

visible, except a few of the larger ones, as the belt of Orion, the planet Venus, and the luminous radii of the Southern Cross.

From my feet a broad band of silver stretched away to the horizon, marking the meridian of the moon. This was broken by the line of coral reef, over which the surf curled and sparkled with a phosphoric brightness. The reef itself, running all round, seemed to gird the islet in a circle of fire. Here only were the waves in motion, as if pressed by some subaqueous and invisible power; for beyond, scarcely a breath stirred the sleeping sea. It lay smooth and silent, while a satellite sky seemed carved out in its azure depths.

On the south, a hundred ships were in the deep roadstead, a cable's length from each other—their hulls, spars, and rigging magnified to gigantic proportions under the deceptive and tremulous moonbeam. They were motionless as if the sea had been frozen around them into a solid crystal. Their flags drooped listlessly down, trailing along the masts, or warped and twined around the halyards.

Up against the easy ascent extended the long rows of white tents, shining under the silvery moonbeam like pyramids of snow. In one a light was still gleaming through the canvas, where, perchance, some soldier sat up, wearily wiping his gun, or burnishing the brasses upon his belts.

Now and then dark forms—human and uniformed—passed to and fro from tent to tent, each returning from a visit to some regimental comrade. At equal distances round the camp, others stood upright and motionless—the gleam of the musket showing the sentry on his silent post.

The plunge of an oar, as some boat was rowed out among the anchored ships—the ripple of the light breaker—at intervals the hail of a sentinel, "Who goes there?"—the low parley that followed—the chirp of the cicada in the dark jungle—or the scream of the sea-bird, scared by some sub-

marine enemy from its watery rest—were the only sounds that disturbed the deep stillness of the night.

I continued my walk along the beach until I had reached that point of the island directly opposite to the mainland of Mexico. Here the chapparal grew thick and tangled, running down to the water's edge, where it ended in a clump of mangroves. As no troops were encamped here, the islet had not been cleared at this point, and the jungle was dark and solitary.

The moon was now going down, and straggling shadows began to fall upon the water.

Certainly some one skulked into the bushes!—a rustling in the leaves—yes! some fellow who has strayed beyond the line of sentries, and is afraid to return to camp. Ha! a boat! a skiff it is—a net and buoys! As I live, 'tis a Mexican craft!—who can have brought it here? Some fisherman from the coast of Tuspan. No, he would not venture; it must be——

A strange suspicion flashed across my mind, and I rushed through the mangrove thicket, where I had observed the object a moment before. I had not proceeded fifty yards when I saw the folly of this movement. I found myself in the midst of a labyrinth, dark and dismal, surrounded by a wall of leaves and brambles. The branches of the mangroves, rooted at their tops, barred up the path, and vines laced them together.

'If they be spies," thought I, "I have taken the worst plan to catch them. I may as well go through now. I cannot be distant from the rear of the camp. Ugh! how dismal!"

I pushed on, climbing over fallen trunks, and twining myself through the viny cordage. The creepers clung to my neck—thorns penetrated my skin—the *mezquite* slapped me in the face, drawing blood. I laid my hand upon a pendent limb; a clammy object struggled under my touch, with a

terrified yet spiteful violence, and, freeing itself, sprang over my shoulder, and scampered off among the fallen leaves. I felt its fetid breath, as the cold scales brushed against my cheek. It was the hideous iguana.

A huge bat flapped its sail-like wings in my face, and returned again and again, breathing a mephitic odor that caused me to gasp. Twice I struck at it with my sword, cutting only the empty air. A third time my blade was caught in the trellis of parasites. It was horrible; I felt terrified to contend with such strange enemies.

At length, after a continued struggle, an opening appeared before me—a glade; I rushed to the welcome spot.

"What a relief!" I ejaculated, emerging from the leafy darkness. Suddenly, I started back with a cry of horror; my limbs refused to act; the sword fell from my grasp, and I stood palsied and transfixed, as if by a bolt from heaven.

Before me, and not over three paces distant, the image of Death himself rose out of the earth, and stretched forth his skeleton arms to clutch me. It was no phantom. There was the white, naked skull, with its eyeless sockets, the long fleshless limbs, the open, serrated ribs, the long, jointed fingers of Death himself.

As my bewildered brain took in these objects, I heard a noise in the bushes, as of persons engaged in an angry struggle.

"Emile, Emile!" cried a female voice, "you shall not murder him—you shall not!"

"Off! off!—Marie, let me go?" was shouted in the rough accents of a man.

"Oh, no!" continued the female, "you shall not—no—no—no!"

"Curses on the woman! There, let me go now!"

There was a sound as of some one struck with violence—a scream—and at the same moment a human figure rushed out of the bushes, and, confronting me, exclaimed ·

"Ha! Monsieur le Capitaine! *coup pour coup!*"

I heard no more; a heavy blow, descending upon my temples, deprived me of all power, and I fell senseless to the earth.

When I returned to consciousness, the first objects I saw

Umbrella Palms of Tropical America.

were the huge brown whiskers of Lincoln, then Lincoln himself, then the pale face of the boy Jack; and, finally, the forms of several soldiers of my company. I saw that I was in my own tent, and stretched upon my camp-bed.

"What?—how?—what's the matter?—what's this?" I

said, raising my hands to the bandage of wet linen that bound my temples.

"Keep still, cap'n," said Bob, taking my hand from the fillet and placing it by my side.

"Och! by my sowl, he's over it; thank the Lord for His goodness!" said Chane, an Irish soldier.

"Over what? what has happened to me?" I inquired.

"Och, captain, yer honner, you've been nearly murthered, and all by thim Frinch scoundhrels; bad luck to their dirty frog-atin' picthers!"

"Murdered! French scoundrels! Bob, what is it?"

"Why, yer see, cap'n, you've had a cut hyur over the head; and we think it's them Frenchmen."

"Oh! I remember now; a blow—but the Death?—the Death?"

I started up from the bed, as the phantom of my night adventure returned to my imagination.

"The Death, cap'n?—what do yer mean?" inquired Lincoln, holding me in his strong arms.

"Oh! the cap'n manes the skilleton, maybe," said Chane.

"What skeleton?" I demanded.

"Why, an owld skilleton the boys found in the chapparil, yer honner. They hung it to a three; and we found yer honner there, with the skilleton swinging over ye like a sign. Och! the Frinch bastes!"

I made no further inquiries about the "Death."

"But where are the Frenchmen?" asked I, after a moment.

"Clane gone, yer honner," replied Chane.

"Gone?"

"Yes, cap'n; that's so as he sez it," answered Lincoln.

"Gone! What do you mean?" I inquired.

"Desarted, cap'n."

"How do you know that?"

"Because they ain't here."

"On the island?"

"Searched it all—every bush."

"But who? which of the French?"

"Dubrosc and that 'ar boy that was always with him—both desarted."

"Ay and the devil go wid them! He'll niver hiv his own till he gets a hoult ov Misther Dubrosc; bad cess to him!"

"You are sure they are missing?"

"Looked high and low, cap'n. Gravenitz seed Dubrosc steal into the chapparil with his musket. Shortly afterwards we heern a shot, but thought nothin' of it till this mornin', when one of the sodgers foun' a Spanish sombrary out thar; and Chane heern some'dy say the shot passed through Major Twing's markey. Besides, we foun' this butcher-knife where yer was lying."

Lincoln here held up a species of Mexican sword called a *machete*.

"Ha!—well."

"That's all, cap'n; only its my belief there was Mexicans on this island, and them Frenchmen's gone with them."

After Lincoln left me, I lay musing on this still somewhat mysterious affair. My memory, however, gradually grew clearer; and the events of the preceding night soon became linked together and formed a complete chain. The shot that passed so near my head in Twing's tent—the boat—the French words I had heard before I received the blow—and the exclamation, "*coup pour coup!*"—all convinced me that Lincoln's conjectures were right.

Dubrosc had fired the shot, and struck the blow that had left me senseless.

But who could the woman be whose voice I had heard pleading in my behalf?

My thoughts reverted to the boy who had gone off with Dubrosc, and whom I had often observed in the company

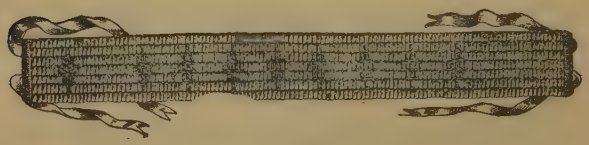
of the latter. A strange attachment appeared to exist between them, in which the boy seemed to be the devoted slave of the strong, fierce creole. Could this be a woman?

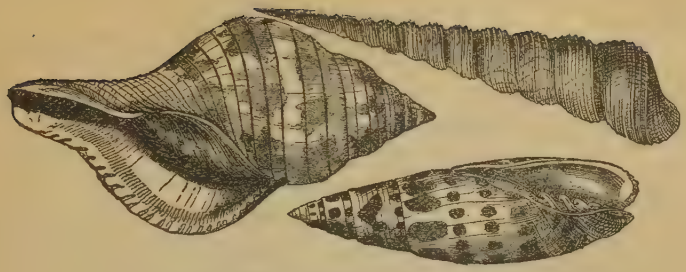
I recollected having been struck which his delicate features, the softness of his voice, and the smallness of his hands. There were other points, besides, in the *tournure* of the boy's figure, that had appeared singular to me. I had frequently observed the eyes of this lad bent upon me, when Dubrosc was not present, with a strange and unaccountable expression.

Many other peculiarities connected with the boy and Dubrosc, which at the time had passed unnoticed and unheeded, now presented themselves to my recollection, all tending to prove the identity of the boy with the woman whose voice I had heard in the thicket.

I could not help smiling at the night's adventures—determined, however, to conceal that part which related to the skeleton.

In a few days my strength was restored. The cut I had received was not deep—thanks to my forage-cap and the bluntness of the Frenchman's weapon.





Shells from the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LANDING AT SACRIFICIOS.

EARLY in the month of March, the troops at Lobos were reëmbarked, and dropped down to the roadstead of Anton, Lizardo. The American fleet was already at anchor there and in a few days above a hundred sail of transports had joined it.

There is no city, no village, hardly a habitation upon this half-desert coast. The aspect is an interminable waste of sandy hills, rendered hirsute and picturesque by the plumed frondage of the palm-tree.

We dared not go ashore, although the smooth white beach tempted us strongly. A large body of the enemy was encamped behind the adjacent ridges, and patrols could be seen at intervals galloping along the beach.

I could not help fancying what must have been the feeling of the inhabitants in regard to our ships—a strange sight upon this desert coast, and not a pleasing one to them,

knowing that within those dark hulls were concealed the hosts of their armed invaders. Laocöon looked not with more dread upon the huge ribs of the Danäic horse than did the simple peasant of Anahuac upon this fleet of "oak leviathans" that lay within so short a distance of his shores.

To us the scene possessed an interest of a far different character. We looked proudly upon these magnificent models of naval architecture—upon their size, their number and their admirable adaptation. We viewed with the changing cheek and kindling eye this noble exhibition of a free people's strength; and as the broad banner of our country swung out upon the breeze of the tropics, we could not help exulting in the glory of that great nation whose uniform we wore around our bodies.

It was no dream. We saw the burnished cannon and the bright epaulette, the gleaming button and the glancing bayonet. We heard the startling trumpet, the stirring drum, and the shrill and thrilling fife; and our souls drank in all those glorious sights and sounds that form at once the spirit and the witchery of war.

The landing was to take place on the 9th; and the point of debarkation fixed upon was the beach opposite the island of Sacrificios, just out of range of the guns of Vera Cruz.

* * * * * * *

The 9th of March rose like a dream, bright, balmy, and beautiful. The sea was scarcely stirred by the gentlest breeze of the tropics; but this breeze, light as it was, blew directly in our favor.

At an early hour I observed a strange movement among the ships composing the fleet. Signals were changing in quick succession, and boats gliding rapidly to and fro.

Before daybreak the huge surf-boats had been drawn down from their moorings, and with long hempen hawsers attached to the ships and steamers.

The descent was about to be made. The ominous cloud

which had hung dark and threatening over the shores of Mexico was about to burst upon that devoted land. But where? The enemy could not tell, and were preparing to receive us on the adjacent shore.

The black cylinder began to smoke, and the murky cloud rolled down upon the water, half obscuring the fleet. Here and there a broad sail, freshly unfurled, hung stiffly from the yard; the canvas, escaping from its gasket fastenings, had not yet been braced round to the breeze.

Soldiers were seen standing along the decks; some in full equipments, clutching the bright barrels of their muskets; while others were buckling on their white belts, or cramming their cartouche-boxes.

Officers, in sash and sword, paced the polished quarter-decks, or talked earnestly in groups, or watched with eager eyes the motions of the various ships.

Unusual sounds were heard on all sides. The deep-toned chorus of the sailor—the creaking of the capstan, and the clanking of the iron cogs; the "heave-ho!" at the windlass, and the grating of the huge anchor-chain, as link after link rasped through the rusty ring—sounds that warned us to make ready for a change.

In the midst of these came the brisk rolling of a drum. It was answered by another, and another, and still another, until all voices were drowned by the deafening noise. Then followed the mingling shouts of command—a rushing over the decks—and streams of blue-clad men poured down the dark sides, and seated themselves in the surf-boats. These were filled in a twinkling, and all was silent as before. Every voice was hushed in expectation, and every eye bent upon the little black steamer which carried the commander-in-chief.

Suddenly a cloud of smoke rose up from her quarter; a sheet of flame shot out horizontally; and the report of a heavy gun shook the atmosphere like an earthquake. Before its echoes

had subsided, a deafening cheer ran simultaneously through the fleet; and the ships, all together, as if impelled by some hidden and supernatural power, broke from their moorings, and dashed through the water with the velocity of the wind. Away to the northwest, in an exciting race; away for the island of Sacrificios!

On struggled the ships, bending to the breeze, and cleaving the crystal water with their bold bows; on the steamers, beating the blue waves into a milky way, and dragging the laden boats in their foamy track. On followed the boats through the hissing and frothy caldron. Loud rolled the drum, loud brayed the bugle, and loud huzzas echoed from the adjacent shores.

Already the foe was alarmed and alert. Light horsemen with streaming haste galloped up the coast. Lancers, with gay trappings and long pennons, appeared through the openings of the hills. Foaming, prancing steeds flew with light artillery over the naked ridges, dashing madly down deep defiles, and crushing the cactus with their whirling wheels. "Andela! Andela!" was their cry. In vain they urged their horses—in vain they drove the spur deep and bloody into their smoking sides. The elements were against them, and in favor of their foes.

The earth and the water were their impediments, while the air and the water were the allies of their enemies. *They* clung and sweltered through the hot and yielding sand, or sank in the marshy borders of the Mandinga and the Medellin, while steam and the wind drove the ships of their adversaries like arrows through the water.

The alarm spread up the coast. Bugles were sounding, and horsemen galloped through the streets of Vera Cruz. The alarm-drum beat in the plaza, and the long roll echoed in every *cuartel*.

Signal-rockets shot up from San Juan, and were answered by others from Santiago and Concepcion.

Thousands of dark forms clustered upon the roofs of the city and the ramparts of the castle ; and thousands of pale lips whispered in accents of terror, " They come ! they come ! "

As yet they knew not how the attack was to be made, or where to look for our descent.

They imagined that we were about to bombard their proud fortress of San Juan, and expected soon to see the ships of these rash invaders shattered and sunk before its walls.

The fleet was almost within long range, the black buoyant hulls bounded fearlessly over the water. The eager crowd thickened upon the walls. The artillerists of Santiago had gathered around their guns, silent and waiting orders. Already the burning fuse was sending forth its sulphurous smell, and the dry powder lay temptingly on the touch, when a quick, sharp cry was heard along the walls and battlements, a cry of mingled rage, disappointment, and dismay.

The foremost ship had swerved suddenly from the track ; and bearing sharply to the left, under the *manège* of a skilful helmsman, was running down under the shelter of Sacrificios.

The next ship followed her guide, and the next, and the next ; and, before the astonished multitude recovered from their surprise, the whole fleet had come-to within pistol-shot of the island !

The enemy now, for the first time, perceived the *ruse*, and began to calculate its results. Those giant ships, that but a moment ago seemed rushing to destruction, had rounded to at a safe distance, and were preparing, with the speed and skilfulness of a perfect discipline, to pour a hostile host upon the defenseless shores. In vain the cavalry bugle called their horsemen to the saddle ; in vain the artillery car rattled along the streets ; both would be too late ?

Meanwhile, the ships let fall their anchors, with a plunge, and a rasping, and a rattle. The sails came down upon the

yards; and sailors swung themselves into the great surf-boats, and mixed with the soldiers, and seized the oars.

Then the blades were suddenly and simultaneously dropped on the surface of the wave, a naval officer in each boat directing the movements of the oarsmen.

And the boats pulled out nearer, and by an échelon movement took their places in line.

Light ships of war were thrown upon our flanks, to cover the descent by a cross fire. No enemy had yet appeared, and all eyes were turned landward with fiery expectation. Bounding hearts waited impatiently for the signal.

The report of a single gun was at length heard from the ship of the commander-in-chief; and, as if by one impulse, a thousand oars struck the water, and flung up the spray upon their broad blades. A hundred boats leaped forward simultaneously. The powerful stroke was repeated, and propelled them with lightning speed. Now was the exciting race, the regatta of war! The Dardan rowers would have been distanced here.

On! on! with the velocity of the wind, over the blue waves, through the snowy surf—on!

And now we neared the shore, and officers sprang to their feet, and stood with their swords drawn; and soldiers half sat, half crouched, clutching their muskets. And the keels gritted upon the gravelly bed; and, at the signal, a thousand men, in one plunge, flung themselves into the water, and dashed madly through the surf. Thousands followed, holding their cartridge-boxes breast high; and blades were glancing, and bayonets gleaming, and banners waving; and under glancing blades, and gleaming bayonets, and waving banners, the dark mass rushed high upon the beach.

Then came a cheer—loud, long, and exulting. It pealed along the whole line, uttered from five thousand throats, and answered by twice that number from the anchored ships.

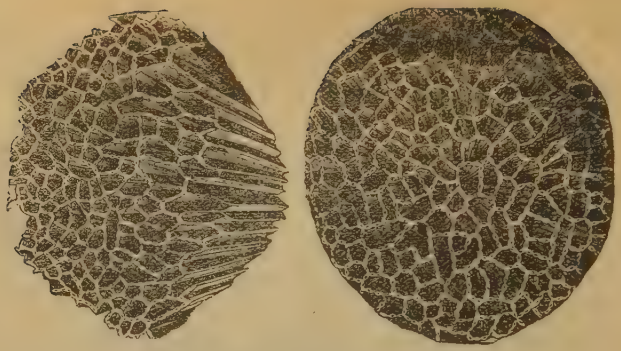
It echoed along the shores, and back from the distant battlements.

A color-sergeant, springing forward, rushed up the steep sides of a sand-hill, and planted his flag upon its snowy ridge.

As the well-known banner swung out upon the breeze, another cheer, wild and thrilling, ran along the line; a hundred answering flags were hauled up through the fleet; the ships of war saluted with full broadsides; and the guns of San Juan, now for the first time waking from their lethargic silence, poured forth their loudest thunder.

The sun was just setting as our column commenced its advance inward. After winding for a short distance through the defiles of the sand-hills, we halted for the night, our left wing resting upon the beach.

The soldiers bivouacked without tents—sleeping upon their arms, with the soft sand for their couch and the cartridge-box for their pillow.



Red Corals of the Caribbean Sea.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF THE TRUE CROSS.

VERA CRUZ is a fortified city. Round and round it is girt by a wall, with regular batteries placed at intervals. You enter it from the land side by three gates, (*garitas*) and from the sea by a beautiful pier or mole that projects some distance into the water. The latter is a modern construction; and when the sun is descending behind the Mexican Cordilleras to the west, and the breeze blows in from the Gulf, this mole—the seat of but little commercial activity—becomes the favorite promenade of the dark-eyed Vera-Cruzanas and their pallid lovers.

The city stands on the very beach. The sea at full tide washes its battlements, and many of the houses overlook the water. On almost every side a plain of sand extends to a mile's distance from the walls, where it terminates in those lofty white sand-ridges that form a feature of the shores of the

Mexican Gulf. During high tides and "northers" the sea washes over the surrounding sand-plain, and Vera Cruz appears almost isolated amid the waves. On one side, however, towards the south, there is variety in the aspect. Here appear traces of vegetation—some low trees and bushes, a view of the forest inward into the country, a few buildings outside the walls, a railway station, a cemetery, an aqueduct, a small sluggish stream, marshes and stagnant pools.

In front of the city, built upon the coral reef, stands the celebrated fortress-castle of San Juan de Ulloa. It is about one thousand yards out from the mole, and over one of its angles towers a lighthouse. Its walls, with the reef on which stands (Gallega), shelter the harbor of Vera Cruz—which in fact, is only a roadstead—from the north winds. Under the lee of San Juan the ships of commerce lie at anchor, There are but few of them at any time.

Another large fort (Concepcion) stands upon the beach at the northern angle of the city, and a third (Santiago) defends it toward the south. A circular bastion, with heavy pieces of ordnance, sweeps the plain to the rear, commanding it, as far as the sand-ridges.

Vera Cruz is a pretty picture to look at, either from the sea or from the sand-hills in the interior. Its massive domes —its tall steeples and turreted roofs—its architecture, half Moorish, half modern—the absence of scattered suburbs or other salient objects to distract the eye—all combine to render the City of the True Cross a unique and striking picture. In fact, its numerous architectural varieties, bound as they are into compact unity by a wall of dark lava-stone, impress you with the idea that some artist had arranged them for the sake of effect. The *coup-d'œil* often reminded me of the engravings of cities in "Goldsmith's Epitome," that used to be considered the bright spots in my lessons of school-geography.

* * * * * * *

At break of day, on the 10th, the army took up its line of march through hills of sand-drift. Division lapped upon division, regiment upon regiment, extending the circle of investment by an irregular échelon. Foot rifles and light infantry drove the enemy from ridge to ridge, and through the dark mazes of the chapparal gorge. The column continued its tortuous track, winding through deep defiles, and over hot white hills, like a bristling snake. It moved within range of the guns of the city, screened by intervening heights. Now and then the loud cannon of Santiago opened upon it, some regiment displayed itself, crossing a defile or pushing over the spur of a sand-hill. The constant rattling of rifles and musketry told that our skirmishers were busy in the advance. The arsenal was carried by a brilliant charge, and the American flag waved over the ruins of the Convent Malibran. On the 11th the Orizava road was crossed, and the light troops of the enemy were brushed from the neighboring hills. They retired sullenly under shelter of their heavy guns, and within the walls of the city.

On the morning of the 12th, the investment was complete. Vera Cruz lay within a semicircle, around its center. The half circumference was a chain of hostile regiments that embraced the city in their concave arc. The right of this chain pitched its tents opposite the isle of Sacrificios; while, five miles off to the north, its left rested upon the hamlet Vergara. The sea covered the complement of this circle, guarded by a fleet of dark and warlike ships.

The diameter hourly grew shorter. The lines of circumvallation lapped closer and closer around the devoted city, until the American pickets appeared along the ridges of the nearest hills, and within range of the guns of Santiago, Concepcion, and Ulloa.

A smooth sand-plain, only a mile in width, lay between the besiegers and the walls of the besieged.

* * * * * * *

After tattoo-beat on the night of the 12th, with a party of my brother officers, I ascended the high hill around which winds the road leading to Orizava.

This hill overlooks the city of Vera Cruz.

After dragging ourselves wearily through the soft, yielding sand, we reached the summit, and halted on a projecting ridge.

With the exception of a variety of exclamations expressing surprise and delight, not a word for a while was uttered by any of our party, each individual being wrapped up in the contemplation of a scene of surpassing interest. It was moonlight, and sufficiently clear to distinguish the minutest objects on the picture that lay rolled out before us like a map.

Below our position, and seeming almost within reach of the hand, lay the city of the True Cross, rising out of the white plain, and outlined upon the blue background of the sea.

The dark gray towers and painted domes; the Gothic turret and Moorish minaret, impressed us with the idea of the antique; while here and there the tamarind, nourished on some azotea, or the fringed fronds of the palm-tree, drooping over the notched parapet, lent to the city an aspect at once southern and picturesque.

Domes, spires and cupolas rose over the old gray walls, crowned with floating banners—the consular flags of France, and Spain, and Britain, waving alongside the eagle of the Aztecs.

Beyond, the blue waters of the Gulf rippled lightly against the sea-washed battlements of San Juan, whose brilliant lights glistened along the combing of the surf.

To the south we could distinguish the isle of Sacrificios, and the dark hulls that slept silently under the shelter of its coral reef.

Outside the fortified wall, which girt the city with its

cincture of gray rock, a smooth plain stretched rearward to the foot of the hill on which we stood; and right and left along the crest of the ridge from Punta Hornos to Vergara, ranged a line of dark forms—the picket sentries of the American outposts as they stood knee-deep in the soft, yielding sand-drift.

It was a picture of surpassing interest; and, as we stood gazing upon it, the moon suddenly disappeared behind a bank of clouds; and the lamps of the city, heretofore eclipsed by her brighter beam, now burned up and glistened along the walls.

Bells rang merrily from church-towers, and bugles sounded through the echoing streets. At intervals we could hear the shrill cries of the guard: "*Centinela! alerte!*" and the sharp challenge, "*Quien viva?*"

Then the sound of sweet music, mingled with the soft voices of women, was wafted to our ears; and with beating hearts we fancied we could hear the light tread of silken feet, as they brushed over the polished floor of the ball-room.

It was a tantalizing moment, and wistful glances were cast on the beleaguered town; while more than one of our party was heard impatiently muttering a wish that it might be carried by assault.

As we continued gazing, a bright jet of flame shot out horizontally from the parapet over Puerto Nuevo.

"Look out!" cried Twing, at the same instant flinging his wiry little carcass squat under the brow of a sand-wreath.

Several of the party followed his example; but, before all had housed themselves, a shot came singing past, along with the loud report of a twenty-four.

The shot struck the comb of the ridge, within several yards of the group, and ricocheted off into the distant hills.

"Try it again!" cried one.

"That fellow has lost a champagne supper!" said Twing.

"More likely he has had it, or his aim would be more steady," suggested an officer.

"Oysters, too—only think of it!" said Clayley.

"Howld your tongue, Clayley, or by my soul I'll charge down upon the town!"

This came from Hennessy, upon whose imagination the contrast between champagne and oysters and the gritty pork and biscuit he had been feeding upon for several days past, acted like a shock.

"There again!" cried Twing, whose quick eye caught the blaze upon the parapet.

"A shell, by the powers" exclaimed Hennessy. "Let it dhrop first, or it may dhrop on ye," he continued, as several officers were about to fling themselves on their faces.

The bomb shot up with a hissing, hurtling sound. A little spark could be seen as it traced its graceful curves through the dark heavens.

The report echoed from the walls, and at the same instant, was heard a dull sound, as the shell buried itself in the sand-drift.

It fell close to one of the picket sentinels, who was standing upon his post within a few paces of the group. The man appeared to be either asleep or stupefied, as he remained stock-still. Perhaps he had mistaken it for the ricochet of a round shot.

"It's big shooting for them to hit the hill!" exclaimed a young officer.

The words were scarcely passed when a loud crash, like the bursting of a cannon, was heard under our feet; the ground opened like an earthquake; and, amidst the whistling of the fragments, the sand was dashed into our faces.

A cloud of dust hung for a moment above the spot. The moon at this instant reappeared; and, as the dust slowly settled away, the mutilated body of the soldier was seen

upon the brow of the hill, at the distance of twenty paces from his post.

A low cheer reached us from Concepcion, the fort whence the shell had been projected.

Chagrined at the occurrence, and mortified that it had been caused by our imprudence, we were turning to leave the hill, when the "whish" of a rocket attracted our attention.

It rose from the chapparal, about a quarter of a mile in rear of the camp; and, before it had reached its culminating point, an answering signal shot up from the Puerto Nuevo.

At the same instant a horseman dashed out of the thicket, and headed his horse at the steep sand-hills. After three or four desperate plunges, the fiery mustang gained the crest of the ridge upon which lay the remains of the dead soldier.

Here the rider, seeing our party, suddenly reined up and balanced for a moment in the stirrup, as if uncertain whether to advance or retreat.

We, on the other hand, taking him for some officer of our own, and wondering who it could be galloping about at such an hour, stood silent and waiting.

"By heavens, that's a Mexican? muttered Twing, as the ranchero dress became apparent under a brighter beam of the moon.

Before anyone could reply, the strange horseman wheeled sharply to the left, and, drawing a pistol, fired it into our midst. Then spurring his wild horse, he galloped past us into a deep defile of the hills.

"You're a set of cussed Yankee fools!" he shouted back, as he reached the bottom of the dell.

Half a dozen shots replied to the taunting speech; but the retreating object was beyond pistol range before our astonished party had recovered from their surprise at such an act of daring audacity.

In a few minutes we could see both horse and rider near the walls of the city—a speck on the white plain; and shortly after we heard the grating hinges of the Puerto Nuevo, as the huge gate swung open to receive him. No one was hit by the shot of his pistol. Several could be heard gritting their teeth with mortification as we commenced descending the hill.

"Did you know that voice, captain?" whispered Clayley to me as we returned to camp.

"Yes."

"You think it was——"

"Dubrosc."

CHAPTER X.

MAJOR BLOSSOM.

N reaching the camp I found a mounted orderly in front of my tent.

"From the general," said the soldier, touching his cap, and handing me a sealed note.

The orderly, without waiting a reply, leaped into his saddle and rode off.

I broke the seal with delight:

"SIR,—You will report, with fifty men, to Major Blossom, at 4 A. M. to-morrow.

"By order,
"A. A. A. G.

(Signed)
"Captain Haller, commanding
Co. Rifle Rangers."

"Old Blos, eh? Quartermaster scouting, I hope," said Clayley, looking over the contents of the note.

"Anything but the trenches; I am sick of them."

"Had it been anybody else but Blossom—fighting

Daniels, for instance—we might have reckoned on a comfortable bit of duty; but the old whale can hardly climb into his saddle—it *does* look bad."

"I will not long remain in doubt. Order the sergeant to warn the men for four."

I walked through the camp in search of Blossom's marquee, which I found in a grove of caoutchouc-trees, and out of range of the heaviest metal in Vera Cruz. The major himself was seated in a large Campeachy chair, that had been "borrowed" from some neighboring rancho; and perhaps it was never so well filled as by its present occupant.

It would be useless to attempt an elaborate description of Major Blossom. That would require an entire chapter.

Perhaps the best that can be done to give the reader an idea of him is to say that he was a great, fat, red man, and known among his brother officers as "the swearing major." If anyone in the army loved good living, it was Major Blossom; and if anyone hated hard living, that man was Major George Blossom. He hated Mexicans too, and mosquitoes, and scorpions, and snakes, and sand-flies, and all enemies to his rest and comfort; and the manner in which he swore at these natural foes would have entitled him to a high commission in the celebrated army of Flanders.

Major Blossom was a quartermaster in more senses than one, as he occupied more quarters than any two men in the army, not excepting the general-in-chief; and when many a braver man and better officer was cut down to "twenty-five pounds of baggage," the private lumber of Major Blossom, including himself, occupied a string of wagons like a siege-train.

As I entered the tent he was seated at supper. The viands before him were in striking contrast to the food upon which the army was then subsisting. There was no gravel

gritting between the major's teeth as he masticated mess-pork or moldy biscuit. He found no *débris* of sand and small rocks at the bottom of his coffee-cup. No; quite the contrary.

A dish of pickled salmon, a side of cold turkey, a plate of sliced tongue, with a fine Virginia ham, were the striking features of the major's supper, while a handsome French coffee-urn, containing the essence of Mocha, simmered upon the table. Out of this the major, from time to time, replenished his silver cup. A bottle of *eau-de-vie*, that stood near his right hand, assisted him likewise in swallowing his ample ration.

"Major Blossom, I presume?" said I.

"My name," ejaculated the major, between two swallows, so short and quick that the phrase sounded like a monosyllable.

"I have received orders to report to you, sir."

"Ah! bad business! bad business!" exclaimed the major, qualifying the words with an energetic oath.

"How, sir?"

"Atrocious business! dangerous service! Can't see why they sent *me*."

"I came, major, to inquire the nature of the service, so that I may have my men in order for it."

"Confounded dangerous service."

"It is?

"Infernal cut-throats! thousands of 'ém in the bushes—bore a man through as soon as wink. Those yellow devils are worse than——" and again the swearing major wound up with an exclamation not proper to be repeated.

"Can't see why they picked *me* out. There's Myers, and Wayne and Wood, not half my size, and that thin scare-the-crows, Allen; but no—the general wants *me* killed. Die soon enough in this infernal nest of centipedes without being shot in the chapparal! I wish the chapparal was——" and again

the major's unmentionable words came pouring forth in a volley.

I saw that it was useless to interrupt him until the first burst was over. From his frequent anathemas on the "bushes" and the "chapparal," I could gather that the service I was called upon to perform lay at some distance from the camp; but beyond this I could learn nothing, until the major had sworn himself into a degree of composure, which after some minutes he accomplished. I then restated the object of my visit.

"We're going into the country for mules," replied the major. "Mules, indeed! Heaven knows there isn't a mule within ten miles, unless with a yellow-hided Mexican on his back; and such mules we don't want. The volunteers—curse them!—have scared everything to the mountains: not a stick of celery nor an onion to be had at any price."

"How long do you think we may be gone?" I inquired.

"Long? Only a day. If I stay overnight in the chapparal, may a wolf eat me! Oh no; if the mules don't turn up soon, somebody else may go fetch 'em—that's all."

"I may ration them for one day?" said I.

"Two—two; your fellows 'll be hungry. Roberts, of the Rifles, who's been out in the country, tells me there isn't enough forage to feed a cat. So you'd better take two days' biscuit; I suppose we'll meet with beef enough on the hoof; though I'd rather have a rump-steak out of the Philadelphia market than all the beef in Mexico. Hang their beef! it's as tough as tan leather!"

"At four o'clock then, major, I'll be with you," said I, preparing to take my leave.

"Make it a little later, captain; I get no sleep with these cursed gallynippers and things; but, stay—how many men have you got?"

"In my company eighty; but my order is to take only fifty."

"There again! I told you so; want me killed - they want old Blos killed. Fifty men, when a thousand of the leather-skinned devils have been seen not ten miles off! Fifty men! great heavens! fifty men! There's an escort to take the chapparal with!"

"But they are fifty men worth a hundred, I promise you."

"And if they were worth five hundred, it would be enough: I tell you the chapparal's full—full as——" (a certain place of torment familiar to the major's lips).

"We shall have to proceed with the more caution," I rejoined.

"Caution be——!" and caution was summarily sentenced to the same regions. "Bring all—every son of a gun—bugler and all."

"But that, major, would be contrary to the general's orders."

"Hang the general's orders! Obey some generals' orders in this army, and you would do queer things. Bring them all; take my advice. I tell you, if you don't our lives may answer for it. Fifty men!"

I was about to depart when the major stopped me with a loud "Hilloa!"

"Why," cried he, "I have lost my senses. Your pardon, captain! This unlucky thing has driven me crazy. They must pick upon *me!* What will you drink? Here's some good brandy—infernal good; sorry I can't say as much for the water."

I mixed a glass of brandy and water; the major did the same; and, having pledged each other, we bade "good night," and separated.

A Fresh Air Colony. Indian Residence in the Tropics.

CHAPTER XI.

SCOUTING IN THE CHAPPARAL.

BETWEEN the shores of the Mexican Gulf and the "foot hills" (*piedmont*) of the great chain of the Andes, lies a strip of low lands. In many places this belt is nearly a hundred miles in breadth, but generally less than fifty. It is of a tropical character, termed in the language of the country *tierra caliente*. It is mostly covered with jungly forests, in which are found the palm, the tree-ferns, the mahogany and India-rubber trees, dyewoods, canes, llianas, and many other gigantic parasites. In the underwood you meet thorny aloes, the "pita" plant, and wild mezcal; various cactaceæ, and flora of singular forms, scarcely known to the

botanist. There are swamps dark and dank, overshadowed by the tall cypress with its pendent streamers of silvery moss (*Tillandsia usneoïdes*). From these arise the miasma—the mother of the dreaded "vomito."

This unhealthy region is but thinly inhabited; but here you meet with people of the African race, and nowhere else in Mexico. In the towns—and there are but few—you see the yellow mulatto, and the pretty quadroon with her black waving hair; but in the spare settlements of the country you meet with a strange race—the cross of the negro with the ancient inhabitants of the country—the "zamboes."

Along the coast and in the black country, behind Vera Cruz, you will find these people living a half-indolent, half-savage life, as small cultivators, cattle-herds, fishermen, or hunters. In riding through the forest you may often chance upon such a picture as the following:

There is an opening in the woods that presents an aspect of careless cultivation—a mere patch cleared out of the thick jungle—upon which grow yams, the sweet potato (*convolvulus batata*), chilé, melons, and the calabash. On one side of the clearing there is a hut—a sort of shed. A few upright poles forked at their tops; a few others laid horizontally upon them; a thatch of palm-leaves to shadow the burning rays of the sun—that is all.

In this shadow there are human beings—men, women, children. They wear rude garments of white cotton cloth; but they are half naked, and their skins are dark, almost black. Their hair is woolly and frizzled. They are not Indians, they are not negroes, they are "zamboes"—a mixture of both. They are coarse-featured, and coarsely clad. You would find it difficult, at a little distance, to distinguish their sex, did you not know that those who swing in the hammocks and recline indolently upon the palm-mats (*petatés*) are the men, and those who move about and do the work are the females. One of the former occasionally stim-

ulates the activity of the latter by a stroke of the "cuarto" (mule-whip).

A few rude implements of furniture are in the shed: a "metaté," on which the boiled maize is ground for the "tortilla" cakes; some "ollas" of red earthenware; dishes of the calabash; a rude hatchet or two; a "macheté" a banjo made from the gourd-shell; a high-peaked saddle, with bridle and "lazo"; strings of red-pepper pods hanging from the horizontal beams—not much more. A lank dog on the ground in front; a lean "mustang" tied to the tree; a couple of "burros" (donkeys); and perhaps a sorry galled mule in an enclosure adjoining.

The zambo enjoys his *dolce far niente* while his wife does the work—what work there is, but that is not much. There is an air of neglect that impresses you; an air of spontaneity about the picture—for the yams and the melons, and the chilé-plants, half choked with weeds, seem to grow without culture, and the sun gives warmth, so as to render almost unnecessary the operations of the spindle and the loom.

The forest opens again, and another picture—a prettier one—presents itself. It bears the aspect of a better cultivation, though still impressing you with ideas of indolence and neglect. This picture is the "rancho," the settlement of the small farmer, or "vaguero" (cattle-herd). Its form is that of an ordinary house, with gables and sloping roof, but its walls are peculiar. They are constructed of gigantic bamboo canes, or straight poles of the *Fouquiera splendens*. These are laced together by cords of the "pita" aloe; but the interstices between are left open, so as freely to admit the breeze. Coolness, not warmth, is the object of these buildings. The roof is a thatch of palm leaves, and with far-impending eaves casts off the heavy rain of the tropics. The appearance is striking—more picturesque even than the châlet of Switzerland.

There is but little furniture within. There is no table;

there are few chairs, and these of raw hide nailed upon a rude frame. There are bedsteads of bamboo; the universal tortilla-stone ("metaté"); mats of palm-leaf; baskets of the same material; a small altar-like fireplace in the middle of the floor; a bandolon hanging by the wall; a saddle of stamped leather, profusely ornamented with silver nails and plates; a hair bridle, with huge Mameluke bit; an escopette and sword, or macheté; an endless variety of gaily-painted bowls, dishes, and cups, but neither knife, fork nor spoon. Such are the movables of a "rancho" in the *tierra caliente.*

You may see the ranchero by the door, or attending to his small, wiry, and spirited horse, outside. The man himself is either of Spanish blood or a "mestizo." He is rarely a pure Indian, who is most commonly a peon or laborer, and who can hardly be termed a "ranchero" in its proper sense.

The ranchero is picturesque—his costume exceedingly so. His complexion is swarthy, his hair is black, and his teeth are ivory white. He is often mustached, but rarely takes the trouble to trim or keep these ornaments in order. His whisker is seldom bushy or luxuriant. His trousers (calzoneros) are of green or dark velvet, open down the outside seams, and at the bottoms overlaid with stamped black leather, to defend the ankles of the wearer against the thorny chapparal. A row of bell buttons, often silver, close the open seams when the weather is cold. There are wide drawers (calzoncillos) of fine white cotton underneath; and these puff out through the seams, forming a tasty contrast with the dark velvet. A silken sash, generally of scarlet color, encircles the waist; and its fringed ends hang over the hips. The hunting-knife is stuck under it. There is a short jacket of velveteen, tastefully embroidered and buttoned; a white cambric shirt, elaborately worked and plaited; and over all a heavy broad-brimmed hat (som-

brero), with silver or gold band, and tags of the same material sticking out from the sides. He wears boots of red leather, and huge spurs with bell rowels; and he is never seen without the "serapé." The last is his bed, his blanket, his cloak, and his umbrella.

Mexican Rancheros.

His wife may be seen moving about the rancho, or upon her knees before the metaté kneading tortillas, and besmearing them with "chilé colorado" (red capsicum). She wears a petticoat or skirt of a flaming bright color, very short, showing her well-turned but stockingless ankles, with her small slippered feet. Her arms, neck, and part of her

bosom are nude, but half concealed by the bluish-gray scarf (rebozo) that hangs loosely over her head.

The ranchero leads a free, easy life, burthened with few cares. He is the finest rider in the world, following his cattle on horseback, and never makes even the shortest journey on foot. He plays upon the bandolon, sings an Andalusian ditty, and is fond of chingarito (mezcal whisky) and the "fandango."

Such is the ranchero of the *tierra caliente* around Vera Cruz, and such is he in all other parts of Mexico, from its northern limits to the Isthmus.

But in the *tierra caliente* you may also see the rich planter of cotton, or sugar-cane, or cocoa (cacao), or the vanilla bean. His home is the "hacienda." This is a still livelier picture. There are many fields enclosed and tilled. They are irrigated by the water from a small stream. Upon its banks there are cocoa-trees; and out of the rich moist soil shoot up rows of the majestic plantain, whose immense yellow-green leaves, sheathing the stem and then drooping gracefully over, render it one of the most ornamental productions of the tropics, as its clustering legumes of farinaceous fruit make it one of the most useful. Low walls, white or gaily painted, appear over the fields, and a handsome spire rises above the walls. That is the "hacienda" of the planter—the "rico" of the *tierra caliente*, with its outbuildings and chapel belfry. You approach it through scenes of cultivation. "Peons," clad in white cotton and reddish leathern garments, are busy in the fields. Upon their heads are broad-brimmed hats, woven from the leaf of the sombrero palm. Their legs are naked, and upon their feet are tied rude sandals (*guarachés*) with leathern thongs. Their skins are dark, though not black; their eyes are wild and sparkling; their looks grave and solemn; their hair coarse, long, and crow-black; and, as they walk, their toes turn inward. Their downcast looks, their attitudes and

demeanor, impress you with the conviction that they are those who carry the water and hew the wood of the country. It is so. They are the "Indios mansos" (the civilized Indians): slaves, in fact, though freemen by the letter of the law. They are the "peons," the laborers, the serfs of the land—the descendants of the conquered sons of Anahuac.

Scene in Tropical America; Indian Thatch House, Voyageur.

Such are the people you find in the *tierra caliente* of Mexico— in the environs of Vera Cruz. They do not differ much from the inhabitants of the high plains, either in costume, customs, or otherwise. In fact, there is a homogeneousness about the inhabitants of all Spanish America—making allowance for difference of climate and other peculiarities—rarely found in any other people.

* * * * * * *

Before daybreak of the morning after my interview with the "swearing major," a head appeared between the flaps of my tent. It was that of Sergeant Bŏb Lincoln.

"The men air under arms, cap'n."

"Very well," cried I, leaping from my bed, and hastily buckling on my accouterments.

I looked forth. The moon was still brightly shining, and I could see a number of uniformed men standing upon the company parade, in double rank. Directly in front of my tent a small boy was saddling a very small horse. The boy was "Little Jack," as the soldiers called him; and the horse was little Jack's mustang, "Twidget."

Jack wore a tight-fitting green jacket, trimmed with yellow lace, and buttoned up to the throat; pantaloons of light green, straight cut and striped along the seams; a forage-cap set jauntily upon a profusion of bright curls; a saber with a blade of eighteen inches, and a pair of clinking Mexican spurs. Besides these, he carried the smallest of all rifles. Thus armed and accoutered, he presented the appearance of a miniature Ranger.

Twidget had *his* peculiarities. He was a tight, wiry little animal, that could live upon mezquite beans or maguey leaves for an indefinite time; and his abstemiousness was often put to the test. Afterwards, upon an occasion during the battles in the valley of Mexico, Jack and Twidget had somehow got separated, at which time the mustang had been shut up for four days in the cellar of a ruined convent with no other food than stones and mortar! How Twidget came by his name is not clear. Perhaps it was some waif of the rider's own fancy.

As I appeared at the entrance of my tent, Jack had just finished strapping on his Mexican saddle; and seeing me, up he ran to assist in serving my breakfast. This was hastily despatched, and our party took the route in silence

through the sleeping camp. Shortly after we were joined by the major, mounted on a tall, raw-boned horse; while a darkie, whom the major addressed as "Doc," rode a snug stout cob, and carried a large basket. This last contained the major's commissariat.

We were soon traveling along the Orizava road, the major and Jack riding in advance. I could not help smiling at the contrast between these two equestrians; the former with his great gaunt horse, looming up in the uncertain light of the morning like some huge centaur; while Jack and Twidget appeared the two representatives of the kingdom of Lilliput.

On turning an angle of the forest, a horseman appeared at some distance along the road. The major gradually slackened his pace, until he was square with the head of the column, and then fell back into the rear. This maneuver was executed in the most natural manner, but I could plainly see that the mounted Mexican had caused the major no small degree of alarm.

The horseman proved to be a zambo, in pursuit of cattle that had escaped from a neighboring corral. I put some inquiries to him in relation to the object of our expedition. The zambo pointed to the south, saying in Spanish that mules were plenty in that direction.

"*Hay muchos muchissimos*" (There are many), said he, as he indicated a road which led through a strip of forest on our left.

Following his direction, we struck into the new path, which soon narrowed into a bridle-road or trail. The men were thrown into single file, and marched *à l'Indienne*. The road darkened, passing under thick-leaved trees, that met and twined over our heads.

At times the hanging limbs and joined parasites caused the major to flatten his huge body upon the horn of the saddle; and once or twice he was obliged to alight, and walk under the impeding branches of the thorny acacias.

Our journey continued without noise, silence being interrupted only by an occasional oath from the major—uttered, however, in a low tone, as we were now fairly "in the woods." The road at length opened upon a small prairie or glade, near the borders of which rose a "butte," covered with chapparal.

Leaving the party in ambuscade below, I ascended the butte, to obtain a view of the surrounding country. The day had now fairly broken, and the sun was just rising over the blue waters of the Gulf.

His rays, prinkling over the waves, caused them to dance and sparkle with a metallic brightness; and it was only after shading my eyes that I could distinguish the tall masses of ships and the burnished towers of the city.

To the south and west stretched a wide expanse of champaign country, glowing in all the brilliance of tropical vegetation. Fields of green, and forests of darker green; here and there patches of yellow, and belts of olive-colored leaves; at intervals a sheet of silver—the reflection from a placid lake, or the bend of some silent stream—was visible upon the imposing picture at my feet.

A broad belt of forest dotted with the life-like frondage of the palm, swept up to the foot of the hill. Beyond this an open tract of meadow, or prairie, upon which were browsing thousands of cattle. The distance was too great to distinguish their species; but the slender forms of some of them convinced me that the object of our search would be found in that direction.

The meadow, then, was the point to be reached.

The belt of forest already mentioned must be crossed; and to effect this I struck into a trail that seemed to lead in the direction of the meadow.

The trail became lighter as we entered the heavy timber. Some distance farther on we reached a stream. Here the trail entirely disappeared. No "signs" could be found on the opposite bank. The underwood was thick; and vines,

with broad green leaves and huge clusters of scarlet flowers, barred up the path like a wall.

It was strange! The path had evidently led to this point. but where beyond?

Several men were detached across the stream to find an opening. After a search of some minutes a short exclamation from Lincoln proclaimed success; I crossed over, and found the hunter standing near the bank, holding back a screen of boughs and vine-leaves, beyond which a narrow but plain track was easily distinguished, leading on into the forest. The trellis closed like a gate, and it seemed as if art had lent a hand to the concealment of the track. The foot-prints of several horses were plainly visible in the sandy bottom of the road.

The men entered in single file. With some difficulty Major Blossom and his great horse squeezed themselves through, and we moved along under the shady and silent woods.

After a march of several miles, fording numerous streams, and working our way through tangled thickets of nopal and wild maguey, an opening suddenly appeared through the trees. Emerging from the forest, a brilliant scene burst upon us. A large clearing, evidently once cultivated, but now in a state of neglect, stretched out before us. Broad fields, covered with flowers of every hue—thickets of blooming rose-trees—belts of the yellow helianthus—and groups of cocoa-trees and half-wild plantains, formed a picture singular and beautiful.

On one side, and close to the border of the forest, could be seen the roof of a house, peering above groves of glistening foliage, and thither we marched.

We entered a lane, with its *guardarayas* of orange-trees planted in rows upon each side, and meeting overhead.

The sunlight fell through this leafy screen with a mellowed and delicious softness, and the perfume of flowers was wafted on the air.

The rich music of birds was around us; and the loveliness of the scene was heightened by the wild neglect which characterized it.

On approaching the house we halted; and after charging the men to remain silent, I advanced alone to reconnoiter.

A Young Cayman.

CHAPTER XII.

DVENTUARE WITH A CAYMAN.

THE lane suddenly opened upon a pasture, but within this a thick hedge of jessamines, forming a circle, barred the view.

In this circle was the house, whose roof only could be seen from without.

Not finding any opening through the jessamines, I parted the leaves with my hands, and looked through. The picture was dream-like; so strange, I could scarcely credit my senses.

On the crest of the little hillock stood a house of rare construction—unique and unlike anything I had ever seen. The sides were formed of bamboos, closely picketed, and laced together by fibers of the *pita*. The roof—a thatch of palm-leaves—projected far over the eaves, rising to a cone, and terminating in a small wooden cupola with a cross. There were no windows. The walls themselves were translucent; and articles of furniture could be distinguished through the insterstices of the bamboos.

A curtain of green barège, supported by a rod and rings, formed the door. This was drawn, discovering an ottoman near the entrance, and an elegant harp.

The whole structure presented the *coup-d'œil* of a huge bird-cage, with its wires of gold!

The grounds were in keeping with the house. In these the evidence of neglect, which had been noticed without existed no longer. Every object appeared to be under the training of a watchful solicitude.

A thick grove of olives, with their gnarled and spreading branches and dark green leaves, stretched rearward, forming a background to the picture. Right and left grew clumps of

Mammoth Water Lilies of Tropical America.

orange and lime trees. Golden fruit and flowers of brilliant hues mingled with their yellow leaves: spring and autumn blended upon the same branches!

Rare shrubs—exotics—grew out of large vessels of japanned earthenware, whose brilliant tints added to the voluptuous coloring of the scene.

A *jet d'eau*, crystalline, rose to the height of twenty feet, and, returning in a shower of prismatic globules, stole away through a bed of water-lilies and other aquatic plants, losing itself in a grove of lofty plantain-trees. These, growing

from the cool watery bed, flung out their broad glistening leaves to the length of twenty feet.

No signs of human life met the eye. The birds alone seemed to revel in the luxuriance of this tropical paradise. A brace of pea-fowl stalked over the parterre in all the pride of their rainbow plumage. In the fountain appeared the tall form of a flamingo, his scarlet color contrasting with the green leaves of the water-lily. Songsters were trilling in every tree. The mock-bird, perched upon the highest limb, was mimicking the monotonous tones of the parrot. The toucans and trogons flashed from grove to grove, or balanced their bodies under the spray of the *jet d'eau;* while the humming-birds hung upon the leaves of some honeyed blossom, or prinkled over the parterre like straying sunbeams.

I was running my eye over this dreamlike picture, in search of a human figure, when the soft, metallic accents of a female voice reached me from the grove of plantains. It was a burst of laughter—clear and ringing. Then followed another, with short exclamations, and the sound of water as if dashed and sprinkled with a light hand.

What must be the Eve of a paradise like this! The silver tones were full of promise. It was the first female voice that had greeted my ears for a month, and chords long slumbering vibrated under the exquisite touch.

My heart bounded. My first impulse was "forward!" which I obeyed by springing through the jessamines. But the fear of intruding upon a scene *à la Diane* changed my determination, and my next thought was to make a quiet retreat.

I was preparing to return, and had thrust one leg back through the hedge, when a harsh voice—apparently that of a man—mingled with the silvery tones.

"*Anda!—anda!—hace mucho calor. Vamos à volver.*" (Hasten!—it is hot. Let us return.)

"*Ah no, Pepe! un ratito mas.*" (Ah, no, Pepe! a little while longer.)

"*Vaya, carrambo!*" (Quick, then!)

Again the clear laughter rang out, mingled with the clapping of hands and short exclamations of delight.

"Come," thought I, once more entering the parterre, "as there appears to be one of my own sex here already, it cannot be very *mal à propos* to take a peep at this amusement whatever it be."

I approached the row of plantain-trees, whose leaves screened the speakers from view.

"*Lupe! Lupe! mira! que bonito!*" (Lupe! Lupe! Look here! What a pretty thing!)

"*Ah, pobrecito! echalo, Luz, echalo.*" (Ah! poor little thing! fling it back, Luz.)

"*Voy luego.*" (Presently.)

I stooped down, and silently parted the broad silken leaves. The sight was divine!

Within lay a circular tank, or basin, of crystal water, several rods in diameter, and walled in on all sides by the high screen of glossy plantains, whose giant leaves, stretching out horizontally, sheltered it from the rays of the sun.

A low parapet of mason-work ran around, forming the circumference of the circle. This was japanned with a species of porcelain, whose deep coloring of blue, and green and yellow, was displayed in a variety of grotesque figures.

A strong jet boiled up in the center, by the refraction of whose ripples the gold and red fish seemed multiplied into myriads.

At a distant point a bed of water-lilies hung out from the parapet; and the long, thin neck of a swan rose gracefully over the leaves. Another, his mate, stood upon the bank, drying her snowy pinions in the sun.

A different object attracted me, depriving me for awhile of the power of action.

In the water, and near the jet, were two beautiful girls, clothed in a sort of sleeveless green tunic, loosely girdled.

They were immersed to the waist. So pellucid was the water that their little feet were distinctly visible at the bottom, shining like gold.

Luxuriant hair fell down in broad flakes, partially shrouding the snowy development of their arms and shoulders.

House Built of Bamboos.

Their forms were strikingly similar—tall, graceful, fully developed, and characterized by that eliptical line of beauty that, in the female form more than in any other earthly object, illustrates the far-famed curve of Hogarth.

Their features, too, were alike. "Sisters!" one would exclaim, and yet their complexions were strikingly dissimilar. The blood, mantling darker in the veins of one, lent an olive

tinge to the soft and wax-like surface of her skin, while the red upon her cheeks and lips presented an admixture of purple. Her hair, too, was black; and a dark shading along the upper lip—a mustache, in fact—soft and silky as the tracery of a crayon, contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Her eyes were black, large, and almond-shaped—with that expression which looks *over* one; and her whole appearance formed a type of that beauty which we associate with the Abencerrage and the Alhambra. This was evidently the elder.

The other was the type of a distinct class of beauty—the golden-haired blonde. Her eyes were large, globular, and blue as turquoise. Her hair of a chastened yellow, long and luxuriant; while her skin, less soft and waxen than that of her sister, presented an effusion of roseate blushes that extended along the snowy whiteness of her arms. These, in the sun, appeared as bloodless and transparent as the tiny gold-fish that quivered in her uplifted hand.

I was riveted to the spot. My first impulse was to retire, silently and modestly, but the power of a strange fascination for a moment prevented me. Was it a dream?

"*Ah! que barbara! pobrecito—íto—ito!*" (Ah! what a barbarian you are! poor little thing!)

"*Comeremos.*" (We shall eat it.)

"*Por Dios! no! echalo, Luz, ó tirare la agua en sus ojos.*" (Goodness! no! fling it in, Luz, or I shall throw water in your eyes.) And the speaker stooped as if to execute the threat.

"*Ya—no*" (Now I shall not), said Luz, resolutely.

"*Guarda te!*" (Look out, then!)

The brunette placed her little hands close together, forming with their united palms a concave surface, and commenced dashing water upon the perverse blonde.

The latter instantly dropped the gold-fish, and retaliated.

An exciting and animated contest ensued. The bright globulets flew around their heads, and rolled down their

glittering tresses, as from the pinions of a swan ; while their clear laughter rang out at intervals, as one or the other appeared victorious.

A hoarse voice drew my attention from this interesting spectacle. Looking whence it came, my eye rested upon a huge negress, stretched under a cocoa-tree, who had raised herself on one arm, and was laughing at the contest.

It was her voice, then, I had mistaken for that of a man !

Becoming sensible of my intrusive position, I turned to retreat, when a shrill cry reached me from the pond.

The swans, with a frightened energy, shrieked and flapped over the surface—the gold-fish shot to and fro, like sunbeams, and leaped out of the water, quivering and terrified—and the birds on all sides screamed and chattered.

I sprang forward to ascertain the cause of this strange commotion. My eye fell upon the negress, who had risen, and, running out upon the parapet with uplifted arms, shouted in terrified accents :

"*Valgame Dios niñas ! El cayman ! el cayman !*"

I looked across to the other side of the pond. A fearful object met my eyes—the cayman of Mexico ! The hideous monster was slowly crawling over the low wall, dragging his lengthened body from a bed of aquatic plants.

Already his short fore-arms, squamy and corrugated, rested upon the inner edge of the parapet—his shoulders projecting as if in the act to spring ! His scale-covered back, with its long serrated ridge, glittered with a slippery moistness ; and his eyes, usually dull, gleamed fierce and lurid from their prominent sockets.

I had brought with me a light rifle. It was but the work of a moment to unsling and level it. The sharp crack followed, and the ball impinged between the monster's eyes, glancing harmlessly from his hard skull, as though it had been a plate of steel. The shot was an idle one—perhaps worse ; for, stung to madness with the stunning shock the

reptile sprang far out into the water, and made directly for its victims.

The girls, who had long since given over their mirthful contest, seemed to have lost all presence of mind ; and, instead of making for the bank, stood locked in each other's arms, terrified and trembling.

Their symmetrical forms fell into an agonized embrace ; and their rounded arms, olive and roseate, laced each other, and twined across their quivering bodies.

Their faces were turned to heaven, as though they expected succor from above—a group that rivaled the Laocöon.

With a spring I cleared the parapet and drawing my sword, dashed madly across the basin.

The girls were near the center ; but the cayman had got the start of me, and the water, three feet deep, impeded my progress. The bottom of the tank, too, was slippery, and I fell once or twice on my hands. I rose again, and with frantic energy plunged forward, all the while calling upon the bathers to make for the parapet.

Notwithstanding my shouts, the terrified girls made no effort to save themselves. They were incapable from terror.

On came the cayman with the velocity of vengeance. It was a fearful moment. Already he swam at a distance of less than six paces from his prey, his long snout projecting from the water, his gaunt jaws displaying their quadruple rows of sharp glistening teeth.

I shouted despairingly. I was baffled by the deep water. I had nearly twice the distance before I could interpose myself between the monster and its victims.

"I shall be too late!"

Suddenly I saw that the cayman had swerved. In his eagerness he had struck a subaqueous pipe of the jet.

It delayed him only a moment ; but in that moment I had passed the statue-like group, and stood ready to receive his attack.

"*A la orilla! á la orilla!*" (To the bank! to the bank!) I shouted, pushing the terrified girls with one hand, while with the other I held my sword at arm's length in the face of the advancing reptile.

The girls now, for the first time awaking from their lethargy of terror, rushed towards the bank.

On came the monster, gnashing his teeth in the fury of disappointment, and uttering fearful cries.

As soon as he had got within reach I aimed a blow at his head; but the light saber glinted from the fleshless skull with the ringing of steel to steel.

The blow, however, turned him out of his course, and, missing his aim, he passed me like an arrow. I looked around with a feeling of despair. "Thank heaven! they are safe!"

I felt the clammy scales rub against my thigh; and I leaped aside to avoid the stroke of his tail, as it lashed the water into foam.

Again the monster turned, and came on as before.

This time I did not attempt to cut, but thrust the sabre directly for his throat. The cold blade snapped between his teeth like an icicle. Not above twelve inches remained with the hilt; and with this I hacked and fought with the energy of despair.

My situation had now grown critical indeed. The girls had reached the bank, and stood screaming upon the parapet.

At length the elder seized upon a pole, and, lifting it with all her might, leaped back into the basin, and was hastening to my rescue, when a stream of fire was poured through the leaves of the plantains: I heard a sharp crack—the short humming whiz of a bullet—and a large form, followed by half a dozen others, emerged from the grove, and, rushing over the wall, plunged into the pond.

I heard a loud plashing in the water—the shouts of men, the clashing of bayonets; and then saw the reptile roll over, pierced by a dozen wounds.

Spearing a Sea-cow, or Manatee.

CHAPTER XIII.

DON COSMÉ ROSALES.

"OUR safe, cap'n!" It was Lincoln's voice. Around me stood a dozen of the men, up to their waists. Little Jack, too (his head and forage-cap just appearing above the surface of the water), stood with his eighteen inches of steel buried in the carcass of the dead reptile. I could not help smiling at the ludicrous picture.

"Yes, safe," answered I, panting for breath; "safe—you came in good time, though."

"We heern yur shot, cap'n," said Lincoln, "an' we guessed yur didn't shoot without somethin' ter shoot for; so I tuk half a dozen files and kim up."

"You acted right, sergeant; but where are the——"

I was looking towards the edge of the tank where I had last seen the girls. They had disappeared.

"If yez mane the faymales," answered Chane, "they're *vamosed* through the threes. Be Saint Patrick! the black one's a thrump anyhow! She looks for all the world like them bewtiful crayoles of Dimmerary."

Saying this, he turned suddenly round, and commenced driving his bayonet furiously into the dead cayman, exclaiming between the thrusts :

"Och, ye divil ! bad luck to yer ugly carcass ! You're a nate-looking baste to interfere with a pair of illigant craythers ! Be the crass ! he's all shill, boys. Och, mother o' Moses ! I can't find a saft spot in him !"

We climbed out upon the parapet, and the soldiers commenced wiping their wet guns.

Clayley appeared at this moment, filing round the pond at the head of the detachment. As I explained the adventure to the lieutenant, he laughed heartily.

"By Jove ! it will never do for a despatch," said he ; "one killed on the side of the enemy, and on ours not a wound. There is one, however, who may be reported 'badly scared.'"

"Who ?" I asked.

"Why, who but the bold Blossom ?"

"But where is he ?"

"Heaven only knows ! The last I saw of him, he was screening himself behind an old ruin. I wouldn't think it strange if he was off to camp—that is, if he believes he can find his way back again."

As Clayley said this, he burst into a loud yell of laughter.

It was with difficulty I could restrain myself ; for, looking in the direction indicated by the lieutenant, I saw a bright object, which I at once recognized as the major's face.

He had drawn aside the broad plantain-leaves, and was peering cautiously through, with a look of the most ludicrous terror. His face only was visible, round and luminous, like the full moon ; and like her, too variegated with light and shade, for fear had produced spots of white and purple over the surface of his capacious cheeks.

As soon as the major saw how the "land lay," he came blowing and blustering through the bushes like an elephant ;

and it now became apparent that he carried his long saber drawn and flourishing.

"Bad luck, after all!" said he, as he marched round the pond with a bold stride. "That's all—is it?" he continued, pointing to the dead cayman. "Bah! I was in hopes we'd have a brush with the yellow-skins."

"No, major," said I, trying to look serious; "we are not so fortunate."

"I have no doubt, however," said Clayley with a malicious wink, "but that we'll have them here in a squirrel's jump. They must have heard the report of our guns."

A complete change became visible in the major's bearing. The point of his saber dropped slowly to the ground, and the blue and white spots began to array themselves afresh on his great red cheeks.

"Don't you think, captain," said he, "we've gone far enough into the blasted country? There's no mules in it—I can certify there's not—not a single mule. Had we not better return to camp?"

Before I could reply, an object appeared that drew our attention, and heightened the mosaic upon the major's cheeks.

A man, strangely attired, was seen running down the slope towards the spot where we were standing.

"Guerillas, by Jove!" exclaimed Clayley, in a voice of feigned terror; and he pointed to the scarlet sash which was twisted around the man's waist.

The major looked round for some object where he might shelter himself in case of a skirmish. He was sidling behind a high point of the parapet, when the stranger rushed forward, and, throwing both arms about his neck, poured forth a perfect cataract of Spanish, in which the word *gracias* was of frequent occurrence.

"What does the man mean with his *grashes?*" exclaimed the major, struggling to free himself from the Mexican.

But the latter did not hear him, for his eye at that mo-

ment rested upon my dripping habiliments; and, dropping the major, he transferred his embrace and *gracias* to me.

"Señor Capitan," he said, still speaking in Spanish, and hugging me like a bear, "accept my thanks. Ah, sir! you have saved my children; how can I show you my gratitude?"

Here followed a multitude of those complimentary expressions peculiar to the language of Cervantes, which ended by his offering me his house and all it contained.

I bowed in acknowledgment of his courtesy, apologizing for being so ill prepared to receive his "hug," as I observed that my saturated vestments had wet the old fellow to the skin.

I had now time to examine the stranger, who was a tall, thin, sallow old gentleman, with a face at once Spanish and intelligent. His hair was white and short, while a mustache, somewhat grizzled, shaded his lips. Jet-black brows projected over a pair of keen and sparkling eyes. His dress was a roundabout of the finest white linen, with vest and pantaloons of the same material—the latter fastened round the waist by a scarf of bright red silk. Shoes of green morocco covered his small feet, while a broad Guayaquil hat shaded his face from the sun.

Though his costume was transatlantic—speaking in reference to Old Spain—there was that in his air and manner that bespoke him a true hidalgo.

After a moment's observation I proceeded, in my best Spanish, to express my regret for the fright which the young ladies—his daughters, I presumed—had suffered.

The Mexican looked at me with a slight appearance of surprise.

"Why, Señor Capitan," said he, "your accent—you are a foreigner?"

"A foreigner! To Mexico, did you mean?"

"Yes, señor. Is it not so?"

"Oh! of course," answered I, smiling, and somewhat puzzled in turn.

"And how long have you been in the army, Señor Capitan?"

"But a short time."

"How do you like Mexico, señor?"

"I have seen but little of it as yet."

"Why, how long have you been in the country, then?"

"Three days," answered I; "we landed on the 9th."

"*Por Dios!* three days, and in our army already," muttered the Spaniard, throwing up his eyes in unaffected surprise.

I began to think I was interrogated by a lunatic.

"May I ask what countryman you are?" continued the old gentleman.

"What countryman? An American, of course."

"An American?"

"*Un Americano*," repeated I; for we were conversing in Spanish.

"*Y son esos Americanos?*" (And are these Americans?) quickly demanded my new acquaintance.

"*Si, señor*," replied I.

"*Carrambo!*" shouted the Spaniard, with a sudden leap, his eyes almost starting from their sockets.

"I should say, not exactly Americans," I added. "Many of them are Irish, and French, and Germans, and Swedes, and Swiss; yet they are all Americans now."

But the Mexican did not stay to hear my explanation. After recovering from the first shock of surprise, he had bounded through the grove; and with a wave of his hand, and the ejaculation "*Esperate!*" disappeared among the plantains. The men, who had gathered around the lower end of the basin, burst out into a roar of laughter, which I did not attempt to repress. The look of terrified astonishment of the old Don had been too much for my own gravity; and I could not help being amused at the conversation that

ensued among the soldiers. They were at some distance, yet I could overhear their remarks.

"That Mexikin's an unhospitable cuss!" muttered Lincoln, with an expression of contempt.

"He might av axed the captain to dhrink, after savin' such a pair of illigant craythers," said Chane.

"Sorra dhrap's in the house, Murt; the place looks dry," remarked another son of the Green Isle.

"Och! an' it's a beautiful cage, anyhow," returned Chane; "and beautiful birds in it, too. It puts me in mind of ould Dimmerary; but there we had the liquor, the raal rum—oshins of it, alanna!"

"That 'ere chap's a greelye, I strongly 'spect," whispered one, a regular downeast Yankee.

"A what?" asked his companion.

"Why, a greelye—one o' them 'ere Mexikin robbers."

"Arrah, now! did yez see the rid sash?" inquired an Irishman.

"Thim's captin's," suggested the Yankee.

"He's a captain or a kurnel; I'll bet high on that."

"What did he say, Nath, as he was running off?"

"I don't know 'zactly—somethin' that sounded mighty like 'spearin' on us."

"He's a lanzeer then, by jingo!"

"He had better try on his spearin'," said another; "there's shootin' before spearin'—mighty good ground, too, behind this hyur painted wall."

"The old fellow was mighty frindly at first; what got into him, anyhow?"

"Raoul says he offered to give the captain his house and all the furnishin's."

"Och, mother o' Moses! and thim illigant girls, too?"

"Ov coorse."

"By my sowl! an' if I was the captain, I'd take him at his word, and lave off fightin' intirely."

"It *is* delf," said a soldier, referring to the material of which the parapet was constructed.

"No, it ain't."

"It's chaney, then."

"No, nor chaney either."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's only a stone wall painted, you greenhorn!"

"Stone-thunder! it's solid delf, I say."

"Try it with your bayonet, Jim."

Crick—crick—crick—crinell! reached my ears. Turning round, I saw that one of the men had commenced breaking off the japanned work of the parapet with his bayonet.

"Stop that!" I shouted to the man.

The remark of Chane that followed, although uttered *sotto voce*, I could distinctly hear. It was sufficiently amusing."

"The captain don't want yez to destroy what'll be his own some day, when he marries one of thim young Dons. Here comes the owld one; and, by the powers! he's got a big paper; he's goin' to make over the property!"

Laughing, I looked round, and saw that the Don was returning, sure enough. He hurried up, holding out a large sheet of parchment.

"Well, señor, what's this?" I inquired.

"*No soy Mexicano—soy Español!*" (I am no Mexican—I am a Spaniard), said he, with the expression of a true hidalgo.

Casting my eye carelessly over the document, I perceived that it was a *safe-guard* from the Spanish consul at Vera Cruz, certifying that the bearer, Don Cosmé Rosales, was a native of Spain.

"Señor Rosales," said I, returning the paper, "this was not necessary. The interesting circumstances under which we have met should have secured you good treatment, even were you a Mexican and we the barbarians we have been

represented. We have come to make war, not with peaceful citizens, but with a rabble soldiery."

Es verdad. You are wet, senor? you are hungry?"

I could not deny that I was both the one and the other.

"You need refreshment, gentlemen; will you come to my house?"

"Permit me, señor, to introduce to you Major Blossom—Lieutenant Clayley—Lieutenant Oakes: Don Cosmé Rosales, gentlemen."

My friends and the Don bowed to each other. The major had now recovered his complacency.

"*Vamonos caballeros*" (Come on, gentlemen), said the Don, starting towards the house.

"But your soldiers, capitan?" added he, stopping suddenly.

"They will remain here," I rejoined.

"Permit me to send them some dinner."

"Oh! certainly," replied I; "use your own pleasure, Don Cosmé; but do not put your household to any inconvenience."

In a few minutes we found our way to the house, which was neither more nor less than the cage-looking structure already described.

Fruit Pedler. Water Carrier. Market Woman.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MEXICAN DINNER.

"PASAN *adentro, señores*," said Don Cosmé, drawing aside the curtain of the rancho, and beckoning us to enter.

"Ha!" exclaimed the major, struck with the *coup-d'œil* of the interior.

"Be seated, gentlemen. *Ya vuelvo.*" (I will return in an instant.)

So saying, Don Cosmé disappeared into a little porch in the back, partially screened from observation by a close network of woven cane.

"Very pretty, by Jove!" said Clayley, in a low voice.

"Pretty indeed!" echoed the major, with one of his customary asseverations.

"Stylish, one ought rather to say, to do it justice."

"Stylish!" again chimed in the major, repeating his formula.

"Rosewood chairs and tables," continued Clayley; "a harp, guitar, piano, sofas, ottomans, carpets knee-deep—whew!"

Not thinking of the furniture, I looked around the room, strangely bewildered.

"Ha! ha! what perplexes you, captain?" asked Clayley.

"Nothing."

"Ah! the girls you spoke of—the nymphs of the pond; but where the deuce are they?"

"Ay, where?" I asked, with a strange sense of uneasiness.

"Girls! what girls?" inquired the major, who had not yet learned the exact nature of our aquatic adventure.

Here the voice of Don Cosmé was heard calling out—

"Pepe! Ramon! Francisco! bring dinner. *Anda! anda!*" (Be quick!)

"Who on earth is the old fellow calling?" asked the major, with some concern in his manner. "I see no one."

Nor could we; so we all rose up together, and approached that side of the building that looked rearward.

The house, to all appearance, had but one apartment—the room in which we then were. The only point of this screened from observation was the little veranda into which Don Cosmé had entered; but this was not large enough to contain the number of persons who might be represented by the names he had called out.

Two smaller buildings stood under the olive-trees in the rear; but these, like the house, were *transparent*, and not a human figure appeared within them. We could see through the trunks of the olives a clear distance of a hundred yards. Beyond this, the mezquite and the scarlet leaves of the wild maguey marked the boundary of the forest.

It was equally puzzling to us whither the girls had gone, or whence "Pepe, Ramon, and Francisco" were to come.

The tinkling of a little bell startled us from our conjectures, and the voice of Don Cosmé was heard inquiring—

"Have you any favorite dish, gentlemen?"

Some one answered, "No."

"Curse me!" exclaimed the major, "I believe he can get anything we may call for—raise it out of the ground by stamping his foot or ringing a bell!—Didn't I tell you?"

This exclamation was uttered in consequence of the appearance of a train of well-dressed servants, five or six in number, bringing waiters with dishes and decanters. They entered from the porch; but how did they get into it? Certainly not from the woods without, else we should have seen them as they approached the cage.

The major uttered a terrible invocation, adding in a hoarse whisper, "This must be the Mexican Aladdin!"

I confess I was not less puzzled than he. Meanwhile the servants came and went, going empty, and returning loaded. In less than half an hour the table fairly creaked under the weight of a sumptuous dinner. This is no figure of speech. There were dishes of massive silver, with huge flagons of the same metal, and even cups of gold!

"*Señores, vamos á comer*" (Come, let us eat, gentlemen), said Don Cosmé, politely motioning us to be seated. "I fear that you will not be pleased with my *cuisine*:—it is purely Mexican—*estilo del pais*."

To say that the dinner was not a good one would be to utter a falsehood, and contradict the statement of Major George Blossom, of the U. S. quartermaster's department, who afterwards declared that it was the best dinner he had ever eaten in his life.

Turtle soup first.

"Perhaps you would prefer *julienne* or *vermicelli*, gentlemen?" inquired the Don.

"Thank you; your turtle is very fine," replied I, necessarily the interpreter of the party.

"Try some of the *aguacate*—it will improve the flavor of your soup."

One of the waiters handed round a dark, olive-colored fruit of an oblong shape, about the size of a large pear.

"Ask him how it is used, captain," said the major to me.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I had forgotten

Bread Fruit of the Tropics. When baked it is an excellent substitute for biscuit. Diameter 4 to 5 inches.

that some of our edibles may be strange to you: simply pare off the rind, and slice it thus."

We tried the experiment, but could not discover any peculiar improvement in the flavor of the soup. The pulp of

the aguacate seemed singularly insipid to our northern palates.

Fish, as with us, and of the finest quality, formed the second course.

A variety of dishes were now brought upon the table; most of them new to us, but all piquant, pleasant to the taste, and peculiar.

The major tried them all, determined to find out which he might like best—a piece of knowledge that he said would serve him upon some future occasion.

The Don seemed to take a pleasure in helping the major, whom he honored by the title of "Señor-Coronel."

"*Puchero*, señor coronel?"

"Thank you, sir," grunted the major, and tried the puchero.

"Allow me to help you to a spoonful of *molé*."

"With pleasure, Don Cosmé."

The molé suddenly disappeared down the major's capacious throat.

"Try some of this *chilé relleno*."

"By all means," answered the major. "Ah, by Jove! hot as fire!—whew!"

"*Pica! pica!*" answered Don Cosmé, pointing to his thorax, and smiling at the wry faces the major was making. "Wash it down, señor, with a glass of this claret—or here, Pepe! Is the Johannisberg cool yet? Bring it in, then. Perhaps you prefer champagne, señores?"

"Thank you; do not trouble yourself, Don Cosmé."

"No trouble, captain—bring champagne. Here, señor coronel—try the *guisa de pato*."

"Thank you," stammered the major; "you are very kind. Curse the thing! how it burns!"

"Do you think he understands English?" inquired Clayley of me, in a whisper.

"I should think not," I replied.

"Well, then, I wish to say aloud that this old chap's a

superb old gent. What say you, major? Don't you wish we had him on the lines?"

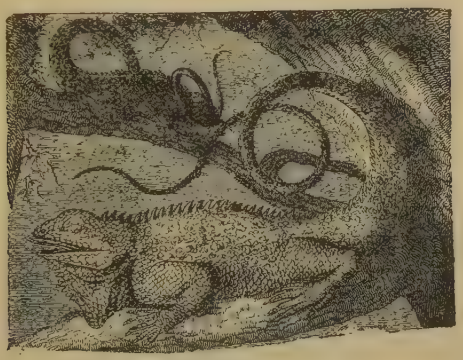
"I wish his kitchen were a little nearer the lines," replied the other, with a wink.

"Señor coronel, permit me——"

"What is it, my dear Don?" inquired the major.

"*Pasteles de Moctezuma.*"

"Oh, certainly! I say, lads: I don't know what the plague I'm eating—it's not bad to take, though."



Mexican Iguana.

"Señor coronel, allow me to help you to a *guana* steak."

"A guana steak!" echoed the major, in some surprise.

"*Si, señor,*" replied Don Cosmé, holding the steak on his fork.

"A guana steak! Do you think, lads, he means the ugly things we saw at Lobos?"

"To be sure—why not?"

"Then, by Jove, I'm through! I can't go lizards. Thank you, my dear Don Cosmé; I believe I have dined."

"Try this; it is very tender, I assure you," insisted Don Cosmé,

"Come, try it, major, and report," cried Clayley.

"Good—you're like the apothecary that poisoned his dog to try the effect of his nostrums. Well"—with an exclamation—"here goes! It can't be very bad, seeing how our friend gets it down. Delicious, by Jupiter! tender as chicken—good, good!"—and amidst sundry similar ejaculations the major ate his first guana steak.

"Gentlemen, here is an ortolan pie. I can recommend it—the birds are in season."

"Reed-birds, by Jove!" said the major, recognizing his favorite dish.

An incredible number of these creatures disappeared in an incredibly short time.

The dinner-dishes were at length removed, and dessert followed: cakes and creams, and jellies of various kinds, and blancmange, and a profusion of the most luxurious fruits. The golden orange, the ripe pine, the pale green lime, the juicy grape, the custard-like cherimolla, the zapoté, the granadilla, the pitahaya, the tuna, the mamay: with dates, figs, almonds, plantains, bananas, and a dozen other species of fruits, piled upon salvers of silver, were set before us: in fact, every product of the tropical clime that could excite a new nerve of the sense of taste. We were fairly astonished at the profusion of luxuries that came from no one knew where.

"Come, gentlemen, try a glass of curaçoa. Señor coronel, allow me the pleasure."

"Sir, your very good health."

"Señor coronel, would you prefer a glass of Majorca?"

"Thank you."

"Or perhaps you would choose *Pedro Ximenes*. I have some old *Pedro Ximenes*."

"Either, my dear Don Cosmé—either."

"Bring both, Ramon; and bring a couple of bottles of the Madeira—*sello verde*" (green seal).

"As I am a Christian, the old gentleman's a conjurer!" muttered the major, now in the best humor possible.

"I wish he would conjure up something else than his confounded wine bottles," thought I, becoming impatient at the non-appearance of the ladies.

"*Café*, señores?" A servant entered.

Coffee was handed round in cups of Sèvres china.

"You smoke, gentlemen? Would you prefer a Havana? Here are some sent me from Cuba by a friend. I believe they are good; or, if you would amuse yourself with a cigarrito, here are Campeacheanos. These are the country cigars —*puros*, as we call them. I would not recommend them."

"A Havana for me," said the major, helping himself at the same time to a fine-looking "regalia."

I had fallen into a somewhat painful reverie.

I began to fear that, with all his hospitality, the Mexican would allow us to depart without an introduction to his family; and I had conceived a strong desire to speak with the two lovely beings whom I had already seen, but more particularly with the brunette, whose looks and actions had deeply impressed me. So strange is the mystery of love! My heart had already made its choice.

I was suddenly aroused by the voice of Don Cosmé, who had risen, and was inviting myself and comrades to join the ladies in the drawing-room.

I started up so suddenly as almost to overturn one of the tables.

"Why, captain, what's the matter?" said Clayley. "Don Cosmé is about to introduce us to the ladies. You're not going to back out?"

"Certainly not," stammered I, somewhat ashamed at my *gauchérie*.

"He says they're in the drawing-room," whispered the major, in a voice that betokened a degree of suspicion; "but where the plague that is, Heaven only knows. Stand by, my boys!—are your pistols all right?"

"Pshaw, major! for shame!"

A Dinner Party in Mexico.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUBTERRANEAN DRAWING-ROOM.

THE mystery of the drawing-room, and the servants, and the dishes, was soon over. A descending stairway explained the enigma.

"Let me conduct you to my cave, gentlemen," said the Spaniard: "I am half a subterranean. In the hot weather, and during the northers, we find it more agreeable to live under the ground. Follow me, señores."

We descended, with the exception of Oakes, who returned to look after the men.

At the foot of the staircase we entered a hall brilliantly

lighted. The floor was without a carpet, and exhibited a mosaic of the finest marble. The walls were painted of a pale blue color, and embellished by a series of pictures from the pencil of Murillo. These were framed in a costly and elegant manner. From the ceiling were suspended chandeliers of a curious and unique construction, holding in their outstretched branches wax candles of an ivory whiteness.

Large vases of waxen flowers, covered with crystals, stood around the hall upon tables of polished marble. Other articles of furniture, candelabra, girandoles, gilded clocks, filled the outline. Broad mirrors reflected the different objects; so that, instead of one apartment, this hall appeared only one of a continuous suite of splendid drawing-rooms.

And yet, upon closer observation, there seemed to be no door leading from this hall, which, as Don Cosmé informed his guests, was the *ante-sala*.

Our host approached one of the large mirrors, and slightly touched a spring. The tinkling of a small bell was heard within; and at the same instant the mirror glided back, reflecting in its motion a series of brilliant objects, that for a moment bewildered our eyes with a blazing light.

"*Pasan adentro, señores,*" said Don Cosmé, stepping aside and waving us to enter.

We walked into the drawing-room. The magnificence that greeted us seemed a vision—a glorious and dazzling hallucination—more like the gilded brilliance of some enchanted palace than the interior of a Mexican gentleman's habitation.

As we stood gazing with irresistible wonderment, Don Cosmé opened a side-door, and called aloud, "*Niñas, niñas, ven aca!*" (Children, come hither!)

Presently we heard several female voices, blended together like a medley of singing birds.

They approached. We heard the rustling of silken dresses,

the falling of light feet in the doorway, and three ladies entered—the señora of Don Cosmé, followed by her two beautiful daughters, the heroines of our aquatic adventure.

These hesitated a moment, scanning our faces; then, with a cry of "*Nuestro salvador!*" both rushed forward, and knelt, or rather crouched, at my feet, each of them clasping one of my hands and covering it with kisses.

Their panting agitation, their flashing eyes, the silken touch of their delicate fingers, sent the blood rushing though my veins like a stream of lava; but in their gentle accents, the simple ingenuousness of their expressions, the childlike innocence of their faces, I regarded them only as two beautiful children kneeling in the *abandon* of gratitude.

Meanwhile Don Cosmé had introduced Clayley and the major to his señora, whose baptismal name was Joaquina; and taking the young ladies one in each hand, he presented them as his daughters, Guadalupe and Maria de la Luz (Mary of the Light).

"Mama," said Don Cosmé, "the gentlemen had not quite finished their cigars."

"Oh! they can smoke here," replied the señora.

"Will the ladies not object to that?" I inquired.

"No—no—no!" ejaculated they simultaneously.

"Perhaps you will join us?—we have heard that such is the custom of your country."

"It *was* the custom," said Don Cosmé. "At present the young ladies of Mexico are rather ashamed of the habit."

"We no smoke—mama, yes," added the elder — the brunette—whose name was Guadalupe.

"Ha! you speak English?"

"Little Englis speak—no good Englis," was the reply.

"Who taught you English?" I inquired, prompted by a mysterious curiosity.

"Un American us teach—Don Emilio."

"Ha! an American?"

"Yes, señor," said Don Cosmé: "a gentleman from Vera Cruz, who formerly visited our family."

I thought I could perceive a desire upon the part of our host not to speak further on this subject, and yet I felt a sudden, and, strange to say, a painful curiosity to know more about Don Emilio, the American, and his connection with our newly-made acquaintance. I can only explain this by asking the reader if he or she has not experienced a similar feeling while endeavoring to trace the unknown past of some being in whom either has lately taken an interest—an interest stronger than friendship?

That mama smoked was clear, for the old lady had already gone through the process of unrolling one of the small cartouche-like cigars. Having re-rolled it between her fingers, she placed it within the gripe of a pair of small golden pincers.

This done, she held one end to the coals that lay upon the *brazero*, and ignited the paper. Then, taking the other end between her thin purplish lips, she breathed forth a blue cloud of aromatic vapor.

After a few whiffs she invited the major to participate, offering him a cigarrito from her beaded cigar-case.

This being considered an especial favor, the major's gallantry would not permit him to refuse. He took the cigarrito, therefore; but once in possession, he knew not how to use it.

Imitating the señora, he opened the diminutive cartridge, spreading out the edges of the wrapper, but attempted in vain to re-roll it.

The ladies, who had watched the process, seemed highly amused, particularly the younger, who laughed outright.

"Permit me, señor coronel," said the Doña Joaquina, taking the cigarrito from the major's hand, and giving it a turn through her nimble fingers, which brought it all right again.

"Thus—now—hold your fingers thus. Do not press it: *suave, suave.* This end to the light—so—very well!"

The major lit the cigar, and, putting it between his great thick lips, began to puff in a most energetic style.

He had not cast off half a dozen whiffs when the fire, reaching his fingers, burned them severely, causing him to remove them suddenly from the cigarette. The wrapper then burst open; and the loose pulverized tobacco by a sudden inhalation rushed into his mouth and down his throat, causing him to cough and sputter in the most ludicrous manner.

This was too much for the ladies, who, encouraged by the cachinnations of Clayley, laughed outright; while the major with tears in his eyes, could be heard interlarding his coughing solo with all kinds of left-handed blessings.

The scene ended by one of the young ladies offering the major a glass of water, which he drank off, effectually clearing the avenue of his throat.

"Will you try another, señor coronel?" asked Doña Joaquina, with a smile.

"No, ma'am, thank you," replied the major, and then a sort of internal subterraneous growl could be heard in his throat.

The conversation continued in English, and we were highly amused at the attempts of our new acquaintances to express themselves in that language.

After failing, on one occasion, to make herself understood, Guadalupe said, with some vexation in her manner:

"We wish brother was home come; brother speak ver better Englis."

"Where is he?" I inquired.

"In the ceety—Vera Cruz."

"Ha! and when did you expect him?"

"Thees day—to-night—he home come."

"Yes," added the Señora Joaquina, in Spanish: "he went

to the city to spend a few days with a friend ; but he was to return to-day, and we are looking for him to arrive in the evening."

"But how is he to get out ?" cried the major, in his coarse, rough manner.

"How ?—why, señor ?" asked the ladies in a breath, turning deadly pale.

"Why, he can't pass the pickets, ma'am," answered the major.

"Explain, captain ; explain !" said the ladies, appealing to me with looks of anxiety.

I saw that concealment would be idle. The major had fired the train.

"It gives me pain, ladies," said I, speaking in Spanish, "to inform you that you must be disappointed. I fear the return of your brother to-day is impossible."

"But why, captain ?—why ?"

"Our lines are completely around Vera Cruz, and all intercourse to and from the city is at an end."

Had a shell fallen into Don Cosmé's drawing-room, it could not have caused a greater change in the feelings of its inmates. Knowing nothing of military life, they had no idea that our presence there had drawn an impassable barrier between them and a much-loved member of their family. In a seclusion almost hermetical, they knew that a war existed between their country and the United States ; but that was far away upon the Rio Grande. They had heard, moreover, that our fleet lay off Vera Cruz, and the pealing of the distant thunder of San Juan had from time to time reached their ears ; but they had not dreamed, on seeing us, that the city was invested by land. The truth was now clear ; and the anguish of the mother and daughters became afflicting, when we informed them of what we were unable to conceal —that it was the intention of the American commander to *bombard the city.*

The scene was to us deeply distressing.

Doña Joaquina wrung her hands, and called upon the Virgin with all the earnestness of entreaty. The sisters clung alternately to their mother and Don Cosmé, weeping and crying aloud, "*Pobre Narcisso! nuestro hermanito—le asesinaran!*" (Poor Narcisso, our little brother!—they will murder him!)

In the midst of this distressing scene the door of the drawing-room was thrown suddenly open, and a servant rushed in, shouting in an agitated voice, "*El norté! el norté!*"

Tropical American Indians Spearing Fish.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE NORTHER."

E hurried after Don Cosmé towards the *ante-sala*, both myself and my companions ignorant of this new object of dread.

When we emerged from the stairway, the scene that hailed us was one of terrific sublimity. Earth and heaven had undergone a sudden and convulsive change. The face of nature but a moment since gay with summer smiles, was now hideously distorted. The sky had changed suddenly from its blue and sunny brightness to an aspect dark and portentous.

Along the northwest a vast volume of black vapor rolled up over the Sierra Madre, and rested upon the peaks of the mountains. From this, ragged masses, parting in fantastic forms and groupings, floated off against the concavity of the sky, as though the demons of the storm were breaking up

from an angry council. Each of these, as it careered across the heavens, seemed bent upon some spiteful purpose.

An isolated fragment hung lowering above the snowy cone of Orizava, like a huge vampire suspended over his sleeping victim.

From the great "parent cloud" that rested upon the Sierra Madre, lightning-bolts shot out and forked hither and thither, or sank into the detached masses—the messengers of the storm-king, bearing his fiery mandates across the sky.

Away along the horizon of the east moved the yellow pillars of sand, whirled upward by the wind, like vast columnar towers leading to heaven.

The storm had not yet reached the rancho. The leaves lay motionless under a dark and ominous calm; but the wild screams of many birds—the shrieks of the swans, the discordant notes of the frightened pea-owl, the chattering of parrots, as they sought the shelter of the thick olives in terrified flight—all betokened the speedy advent of some fearful convulsion.

The rain in large drops fell upon the broad leaves, with a soft plashing sound; and now and then a quick, short puff came snorting along, and, seizing the feathery frondage of the palms, shook them with a spiteful and ruffian energy.

The long green stripes, after oscillating a moment, would settle down again in graceful and motionless curves.

A low sound like the "sough" of the sea, or the distant falling of water, came from the north; while at intervals the hoarse bark of the *coyoté*, and the yelling of terrified monkeys, could be heard afar off in the woods.

"*Tapa la casa! tapa la casa!*" (Cover the house!) cried Don Cosmé, as soon as he had fairly got his head above ground.

"*Anda!—anda con los macates!*" (Quick with the cords!)

With lightning quickness a roll of palmetto mats came

down on all sides of the house, completely covering the bamboo walls, and forming a screen impervious to both wind and rain. This was speedily fastened at all corners, and strong stays were carried out and warped around the trunks of trees. In five minutes the change was complete. The cage-looking structure had disappeared, and a house with walls of yellow *petaté* stood in its place.

"Now, señores, all is secured," said Don Cosmé. "Let us return to the drawing-room."

"I should like to see the first burst of this tornado," I remarked, not wishing to intrude upon the scene of sorrow we had left.

"So be it, captain. Stand here under the shelter, then."

"Hot as thunder!" growled the major, wiping the perspiration from his broad red cheeks.

"In five minutes, señor coronel, you will be chilled. At this point the heated atmosphere is now compressed. Patience! it will soon be scattered."

"How long will the storm continue?" I asked.

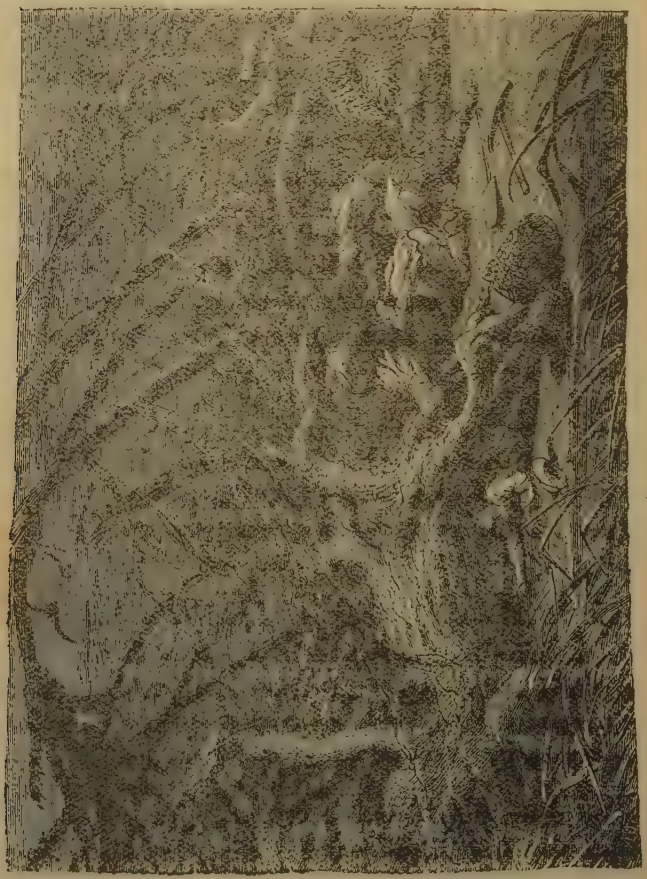
"*Por Dios!* señor, it is impossible to tell how long the "*norté*" may rage: sometimes for days; perhaps only for a few hours. This appears to be a "*huracana.*" If so, it will be short, but terrible while it lasts. *Carrambo!*"

A puff of cold, sharp wind came whistling past like an arrow. Another followed, and another, like the three seas that roll over the stormy ocean. Then, with a loud rushing sound, the broad full blast went sweeping—strong, dark, and dusty—bearing upon its mane the screaming and terrified birds, mingled with torn and flouted leaves.

The olives creaked and tossed about. The tall palms bowed and yielded, flinging out their long pinions like streamers. The broad leaves of the plantains flapped and whistled, and, bending gracefully, allowed the fierce blast to pass over.

Then a great cloud came rolling down; a thick vapor

seemed to fill the space; and the air felt hot, and dark, and heavy. A choking, sulphureous smell rendered the breathing difficult, and for a moment day seemed changed to night.



A Hurricane in the Tropics.

Suddenly the whole atmosphere blazed forth in a sheet of flame, and the trees glistened as though they were on fire. An opaque darkness succeeded. Another flash, and along

with it the crashing thunder—the artillery of heaven—deafening all other sounds.

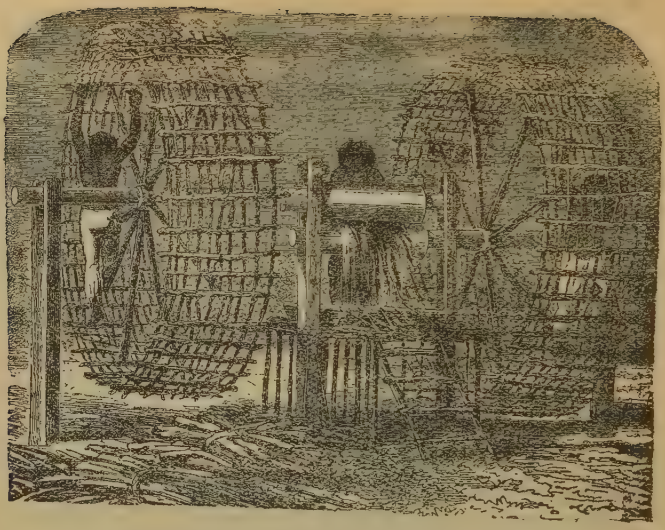
Peal followed peal; the vast cloud was breached and burst by a hundred fiery bolts; and like an avalanche the heavy tropical rain was precipitated to the earth.

It fell in torrents, but the strength of the tempest had been spent on the first onslaught. The dark cloud passed on to the south, and a piercing cold wind swept after it.

"*Vamos à bajar, señores*" (Let us descend, gentlemen), said Don Cosmé, with a shiver, and he conducted us back to the stairway.

Clayley and the major looked towards me with an expression that said, "Shall we go in?" There were several reasons why our return to the drawing-room was unpleasant to myself and my companions. A scene of domestic affliction is ever painful to a stranger. How much more painful to us, knowing, as we did, that our countrymen—that *we*—had been the partial agents of this calamity! We hesitated a moment on the threshold.

"Gentlemen, we must return for a moment: we have been the bearers of evil tidings—let us offer such consolation as we may think of. Come!"



Primitive Sugar Mill used by the Mexicans.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LITTLE FAIR WEATHER AGAIN.

N re-entering the *sala* the picture of woe was again presented, but in an altered aspect. A change, sudden as the atmospheric one we had just witnessed, had taken place; and the scene of wild weeping was now succeeded by one of resignation and prayer.

On one side was Doña Joaquina, holding in her hands a golden rosary with its crucifix. The girls were kneeling in front of a picture—a portrait of Dolores with the fatal dagger; and the "Lady of Grief" looked not more sorrowful from the canvas than the beautiful devotees that bent before her.

With their heads slightly leaning, their arms crossed upon their swelling bosoms, and their long loose hair trailing upon the carpet, they formed a picture at once painful and prepossessing.

Not wishing to intrude upon this sacred sorrow, we made a motion to retire.

"No, señors," said Don Cosmé, interrupting us; "be seated; let us talk calmly—let us know the worst."

We then proceeded to inform Don Cosmé of the landing of the American troops, and the manner in which our lines were drawn around the city, and pointed out to him the impossibility of any one passing either in or out.

"There is still a hope, Don Cosmé," said I, "and that, perhaps, rests with yourself."

The thought had struck me that a Spaniard of Don Cosmé's evident rank and wealth might be enabled to procure access to the city by means of his consul, and through the Spanish ship of war that I recollected was lying off San Juan.

"Oh! name it, captain; name it!" cried he, while at the word "hope" the ladies had rushed forward, and stood clinging around me.

"There is a Spanish ship of war lying under the walls of Vera Cruz."

"We know it—we know it!" replied Don Cosmé eagerly.

"Ah! you know it, then?"

"Oh yes," said Guadalupe. "Don Santiago is on board of her."

"Don Santiago?" inquired I; "who is he?"

"He is a relation of ours, captain," said Don Cosmé—"an officer in the Spanish navy."

This information pained me, although I scarcely knew why.

"You have a friend, then, aboard the Spanish ship," said I to the elder of the sisters. "'Tis well; it will be in his power to restore to you your brother."

A ring of brightening faces was around me while I uttered these cheering words; and Don Cosmé grasping me by the hand, entreated me to proceed.

"This Spanish ship," I continued, "is still allowed to keep up a communication with the town. You should proceed aboard at once, and by the assistance of this friend you may bring away your son before the bombardment commences. I see no difficulty; our batteries are not yet formed."

"I will go this instant!" said Don Cosmé, leaping to his feet, while Doña Joaquina and her daughters ran out to make preparations for his journey.

Hope—sweet hope—was again in the ascendant.

"But how, señor?" asked Don Cosmé, as soon as they were gone—"how can I pass your lines? Shall I be permitted to reach the ship?"

"It will be necessary for me to accompany you, Don Cosmé," I replied; "and I regret exceedingly that my duty will not permit me to return with you at once."

"Oh, señor!" exclaimed the Spaniard, with a painful expression.

"My business here," continued I, "is to procure pack-mules for the American army."

"Mules?"

"Yes. We were crossing for that purpose to a plain on the other side of the woods, where we had observed some animals of that description."

"'Tis true, captain—there are a hundred or more; they are mine—take them all!"

"But it is our intention to pay for them, Don Cosmé. The major here has the power to contract with you."

"As you please, gentlemen; but you will then return this way, and proceed to your camp?"

"As soon as possible," I replied. "How far distant is this plain?"

"Not more than a league. I would go with you, but——" Here Don Cosmé hesitated, and, approaching, said, in a low tone: "The truth is, señor captain, I should be glad if you could take them *without my consent.* I have mixed but little in the politics of this country; but Santa Anna is my enemy—he will ask no better motive for despoiling me."

"I understand you," said I. "Then, Don Cosmé, we will take your mules by force, and carry yourself a prisoner to the American camp—a Yankee return for your hospitality."

"It is good," replied the Spaniard with a smile.

"Señor captain," continued he, "you are without a sword. Will you favor me by accepting this?"

Don Cosmé held out to me a rapier of Toledo steel, with a golden scabbard richly chased, and bearing on its hilt the eagle and nopal of Mexico.

"It is a family relic and once belonged to the brave Guadalupe Victoria."

"Ha! indeed!" I exclaimed, taking the sword; "I shall value it much. Thanks, señor! thanks! Now, major, we are ready to proceed."

"A glass of maraschino, gentlemen?" said Don Cosmé, as a servant appeared with a flask and glasses.

"Thank you—yes," grunted the major; "and while we are drinking it, señor don, let me give you a hint. You appear to have plenty of *pewter.*" Here the major significantly touched a gold sugar-dish, which the servant was carrying upon a tray of chased silver: "Take my word for, it you can't bury it too soon."

"It is true, Don Cosmé," said I, translating to him the major's advice. "We are not French, but there are robbers who hang on the skirts of every army."

Don Cosmé promised to follow the hint with alacrity, and we prepared to take our departure from the rancho.

"I will give you a guide, señor, captain; you will find my

people with the *mulada*. Please *compel* them to lasso the cattle for you. You will obtain what you want in the corral. *Adios señores!*"

"Farewell, Don Cosmé!"

"Adieu, ladies, adieu!"

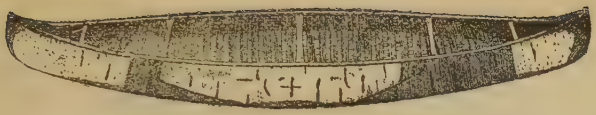
"*Adios, capitan! adios! adios!*"

I held out my hand to the younger of the girls, who instantly caught it and pressed it to her lips. It was the action of a child. Guadalupe followed the example of her sister, but evidently with a degree of reserve. What, then should have caused this difference in their manner?

In the next moment we were ascending the stairway.

"Lucky dog!" growled the major. "Take a ducking myself for that."

"Both beautiful, by Jove!" said Clayley; "but of all the women I ever saw, give me 'Mary of the Light.'"



Sajou Monkey and Mammy Apple of Mexico.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCOUT CONTINUED, WITH A VARIETY OF REFLECTIONS.

LOVE is a rose growing upon a thorny bramble. There is jealousy in the very first blush of a passion. No sooner has a fair face made its impress on the heart than hopes and fears spring up in alternation. Every action, every word every look, is noted and examined with a jealous scrutiny; and the heart of the lover, changing like the chamelon, takes its hues from the latest sentiment that may have dropped from the loved one's lips. And then the various looks, words, and actions, the favorable with the unfavorable, are recalled, and by a mental process classified and marshaled against each other, and compared and

balanced with as much exactitude as the *pros* and *contras* of a miser's bank-book; and in this process we have a new alternation of hopes and fears.

Ah, love! we could write a long history of thy rise and progress; but it is doubtful whether any of our readers would be a jot the wiser for it. Most of them, ere this, have read that history in their own hearts.

I felt and knew that I was in love. It had come like a thought, as it comes upon all men whose souls are attuned to vibrate under the mystical impressions of the beautiful. And well I knew *she* was beautiful. I saw its unfailing index in those oval developments—the index, too of the intellectual; for experience had taught me that *intellect takes a shape;* and that those peculiarities of form that we admire, without knowing why, are but the material illustrations of the diviner principles of mind.

The eye, too, with its almond outline, and wild, half-Indian, half-Arab expression—the dark tracery over the lip, so rarely seen in the lineaments of her sex—even these were attractions. There was something picturesque, something strange, something almost fierce, in her aspect; and yet it was this indefinable something, this very fierceness, that had challenged my love. For I must confess mine is not one of those curious natures that I have read of, whose love is based only upon the goodness of the object. THAT *is not love.*

My heart recognized in her the *heroine of extremes.* One of those natures gifted with all the tenderness that belongs to the angel idea—woman; yet soaring above her sex in the paralyzing moments of peril and despair. Her feelings, in relation to her sister's cruelty to the gold-fish, proved the existence of the former principles; her actions, in attempting my own rescue when battling with the monster, were evidence of the latter. One of those natures that may err from the desperate intensity of one passion, that knows no

limit to its self-sacrifice short of destruction and death. One of those beings that may fall—but *only once*.

"What would I not give—what would I not do—to be the hero of such a heart?"

These were my reflections as I quitted the house.

I had noted every word, every look, every action, that could lend me a hope; and my memory conjured up, and my judgment canvassed, each little circumstance in its turn.

How strange her conduct at bidding adieu! How unlike her sister! Less friendly and sincere; and yet from this very circumstance I drew my happiest omen.

Strange—is it not? My experience has taught me that love and hate for the *same* object can exist in the *same* heart, and at the *same* time. If this be a paradox, I am a child of error.

I believed it then; and her apparent coldness, which would have rendered many another hopeless, produced with me an opposite effect.

Then came the cloud—the thought of Don Santiago—and a painful feeling shot through my heart.

"Don Santiago, a naval officer, young, handsome. Bah! hers is not a heart to be won by a face."

Such were my reflections and half-uttered expressions as I slowly led my soldiers through the tangled path.

Don Santiago's age and his appearance were the creations of a jealous fancy. I had bidden adieu to my new acquaintances knowing nothing of Don Santiago beyond the fact that he was an officer on board the Spanish ship of war, and a relation of Don Cosmé.

"Oh yes! Don Santiago is on board! Ha! there was an evident interest. Her look as she said it; her manner—furies! But he is a relation, a cousin—*a cousin—I hate cousins!*"

I must have pronounced the last words aloud, as Lincoln, who walked in my rear, stepped hastily up, and asked:

"What did yer say, cap'n?"

"Oh! nothing, sergeant," stammered I, in some confusion.

Notwithstanding my assurance, I overheard Lincoln whisper to his nearest comrade:

"What ther old Harry hes got into the cap?"

He referred to the fact that I had unconsciously hooked myself half a dozen times on the thorny claws of the pita-plant, and my overalls began to exhibit a most tattered condition.

Our route lay through a dense chapparal—now crossing a sandy spur, covered with mezquite and acacia; then sinking into the bed of some silent creek, shaded with old cork-trees, whose gnarled and venerable trunks were laced together by a thousand parasites. Two miles from the rancho we reached the banks of a considerable stream, which we conjectured was a branch of the Jamapa River.

On both sides a fringe of dark forest-trees flung out long branches extending halfway across the stream. The water flowed darkly underneath.

Huge lilies stood out from the banks—their broad, wax-like leaves trailing upon the glassy ripple.

Here and there were pools fringed with drooping willows and belts of green *tulé*. Other aquatic plants rose from the water to the height of twenty feet; among which we distinguished the beautiful "iris," with its tall, spear-like stem, ending in a brown cylinder, like the pompon of a grenadier's cap.

As we approached the banks the pelican, scared from his lonely haunt, rose upon heavy wing, and with a shrill scream flapped away through the dark aisles of the forest. The cayman plunged sullenly into the sedgy water; and the "Sajou" monkey, suspended by his prehensile tail from some overhanging bough, oscillated to and fro, and filled the air with his hideous, half-human cries.

Halting for a moment to refill the canteens, we crossed over and ascended the opposite bank. A hundred paces farther on the guide, who had gone ahead, cried out from an eminence, "*Mira la cabalada!*" (Yonder's the drove!)

Vaqueros Lassoing Wild Horses.

CHAPTER XIX.

ONE WAY OF TAMING A BULL.

RUSHING through the jungle, we ascended the eminence. A brilliant picture opened before us. The storm had suddenly lulled, and the tropical sun shone down upon the flowery surface of the earth, bathing its verdure in a flood of yellow light.

It was several hours before sunset, but the bright orb had commenced descending towards the snowy cone of Orizava, and his rays had assumed that golden red which characterizes the ante-twilight of the tropics. The short-lived storm had swept the heavens, and the blue roof of the world was without a cloud. The dark masses had rolled away over the south-eastern horizon, and were now spending their fury upon the dyewood forests of Honduras and Tabasco.

At our feet lay the prairie, spread before us like a green carpet, and bounded upon the farther side by a dark wall of forest-trees. Several clumps of timber grew like islands on the plain, adding to the picturesque character of the landscape.

Near the center of the prairie stood a small rancho, surrounded by a high picket fence. This we at once recognized as the "corral" mentioned by Don Cosmé.

At some distance from the enclosure thousands of cattle were browsing upon the grassy level, their spotted flanks and long upright horns showing their descent from the famous race of Spanish bulls. Some of them, straggling from the herd, rambled through the "mottes," or lay stretched out under the shade of some isolated palm-tree. Ox bells were tinkling their cheerful but monotonous music. Hundreds of horses and mules mingled with the herd; and we could distinguish a couple of leather-clad vaqueros galloping from point to point on their swift mustangs.

These, as we appeared upon the ridge, dashed out after a will bull that had just escaped from the corral.

All five—the vaqueros, the mustangs, and the bull—swept over the prairie like wind, the bull bellowing with rage and terror; while the vaqueros were yelling in his rear, and whirling their long lazos. Their straight black hair floating in the wind—their swarthy, Arab-like faces—their high Spanish hats—their red leather calzoneros, buttoned up the sides—their huge jingling spurs, and the ornamental trappings of their deep saddles—all these combined with the perfect *manège* of their dashing steeds, and the wild excitement of the chase in which they were engaged, rendered them objects of picturesque interest; and we halted a moment to witness the result.

The bull came rushing past within fifty paces of where we stood, snorting with rage, and tossing his horns high in the air—his pursuers close upon him. At this moment one of

the vaqueros launched his lazo, which, floating gracefully out, settled down over one horn. Seeing this, the vaquero did not turn his horse, but sat facing the bull, and permitted the rope to run out. It was soon carried taut; and, scarcely checking the animal, it slipped along the smooth horn and spun out into the air. The cast was a failure.

The second vaquero now flung his lazo with more success. The heavy loop, skilfully projected, shot out like an arrow, and embraced *both* horns in its curving noose. With the quickness of thought the vaquero wheeled his horse, buried his spurs deep into his flanks, and, pressing his thighs to the saddle, galloped off in an opposite direction. The bull dashed on as before. In a moment the lariat was stretched. The sudden jerk caused the thong to vibrate like a bowstring, and the bull lay motionless on the grass. The shock almost dragged the mustang upon his flanks.

The bull lay for some time where he had fallen; then, making an effort, he sprang up, and looked around him with a bewildered air. He was not yet conquered. His eye, flashing with rage, rolled around until it fell upon the rope leading from his horns to the saddle; and, suddenly lowering his head, with a furious roar he rushed upon the vaquero.

The latter, who had been expecting this attack, drove the spurs into his mustang, and started in full gallop across the prairie. On followed the bull, sometimes shortening the distance between him and his enemy, while at intervals the lazo, tightening, would almost jerk him upon his head.

After running for a hundred yards or so, the vaquero suddenly wheeled and galloped out at right angles to his former course. Before the bull could turn himself the rope again tightened with a jerk and flung him upon his side. This time he lay but an instant, and, again springing to his feet, he dashed off in fresh pursuit.

The second vaquero now came up, and, as the bull rushed

past, launched his lazo after, and snared him around one of the legs, drawing the noose upon his ankle.

This time the bull was flung completely over, and with such a violent shock that he lay as if dead. One of the vaqueros then rode cautiously up, and, bending over in the saddle, unfastened both of the lariats, and set the animal free.

The bull rose to his feet, and, looking around in the most cowed and pitiful manner, walked quietly off, driven unresistingly towards the corral.

We commenced descending into the plain, and the vaqueros, catching a glimpse of our uniforms, simultaneously reined up their mustangs with a sudden jerk. We could see from their gestures that they were frightened at the approach of our party. This was not strange, as the major, mounted upon his great gaunt charger, loomed up against the blue sky like a colossus. The Mexicans, doubtless, had never seen anything in the way of horseflesh bigger than the mustangs they were riding: and this apparition, with the long line of uniformed soldiers descending the hill, was calculated to alarm them severely.

"Them fellers is gwine to put, cap'n," said Lincoln, touching his cap respectfully.

"You're right, sergeant," I replied, "and without them we might as well think of catching the wind as one of these mules."

"If yer'll just let me draw a bead on the near mustang, I kin kripple him 'ithout hurtin' the thing thet's in the saddle."

"It would be a pity. No, sergeant," answered I. "I might stop them by sending forward the guide," I continued, addressing myself rather than Lincoln; "but no, it will not do; there must be the appearance of force. I have promised. Major, would you have the goodness to ride forward, and prevent those fellows from galloping off?"

"Lord, captain!" said the major, with a terrified look,

"you don't think I could overtake such Arabs as them? Hercules is slow—slow as a crab."

Now, this was a *lie*, and I knew it! for Hercules, the major's great, raw-boned steed, was as fleet as the wind.

"Then, major, perhaps you will allow Mr. Clayley to make trial of him," I suggested. "He is light weight. I assure you that, without the assistance of these Mexicans, we shall not be able to catch a single mule."

The major, seeing that all eyes were fixed upon him, suddenly straightened himself up in his stirrups, and, swelling with courage and importance, declared, "If that was the case, he would go himself." Then, calling upon "Doc" to follow him, he struck the spurs into Hercules, and rode forward at a gallop.

It proved that this was just the very course to start the vaqueros, as the major had inspired them with more terror than all the rest of our party. They showed evident symptoms of taking to their heels, and I shouted to them at the top of my voice:

"*Alto! somos amigos*" (Halt! we are friends).

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when the Mexicans drove the rowels into their mustangs, and galloped off as if for their lives in the direction of the corral.

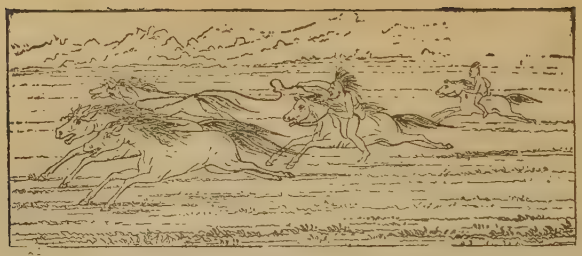
The major followed at a slashing pace, Doc bringing up the rear; while the basket which the latter carried over his arm began to eject its contents, scattering the commissariat of the major over the prairie. Fortunately, the hospitality of Don Cosmé had already provided a substitute for this loss.

After a run of about half a mile Hercules began to gain rapidly upon the mustangs, whereas Doc was losing distance in an inverse ratio. The Mexicans had got within a couple of hundred of yards of the rancho, the major not over a hundred in their rear, when I observed the latter suddenly pull up, and, jerking the long body of Hercules round, commence

riding briskly back, all the while looking over his shoulders towards the inclosure.

The vaqueros did not halt at the corral, as we expected, but kept across the prairie, and disappeared among the trees on the opposite side.

"What the deuce has got into Blossom?" inquired Clayley; "he was clearly gaining upon them. The old bloat must have burst a blood-vessel."



Apache Indians Lassoing Wild Horses.

CHAPTER XX.

A BRUSH WITH THE GUERILLEROS.

"WHY, what was the matter, major?" inquired I, as the major rode up blowing like a porpoise.

"Matter!" replied he, with one of his direst imprecations—"matter, indeed! You wouldn't have me ride plump into their works, would you?"

"Works!" echoed I, in some surprise; "what do you mean by that, major?"

"I mean works—that's all. There's a stockade ten feet high, as full as it can stick of them."

"Full of what?"

"Full of the enemy—full of rancheros. I saw their ugly copper faces—a dozen of them at least—looking at me over the pickets; and, sure as heaven, if I had gone ten paces farther they would have riddled me like a target."

"But, major, they were only peaceable rancheros—cowherds—nothing more."

"Cowherds! I tell you, captain, that those two mahogany-colored devils that galloped off had a sword apiece strapped to their saddles. I saw them when I got near: they were decoys to bring us up to that stockade—I'll bet my life upon it!"

"Well, major," rejoined I, "they're far enough from the stockade now; and the best we can do in their absence will be to examine it, and see what chances it may offer to corral these mules, for, unless they can be driven into it, we shall have to return to camp empty-handed."

Saying this, I moved forward with the men, the major keeping in the rear.

We soon reached the formidable stockade, which proved to be nothing more than a regular corral, such as are found on the great *haciendas de ganados* (cattle farms) of Spanish America. In one corner was a house constructed of upright poles, with a thatch of palm-leaves. This contained the lazos, *alparejas*, saddles, etc. of the vaqueros; and in the door of this house stood a decrepit old zambo, the only human thing about the place. The zambo's woolly head over the pickets had reflected itself a dozen times on the major's terrified imagination.

After examining the corral, I found it excellent for our purpose, provided we could only succeed in driving the mules *into* it; and throwing open the bars, we proceeded to make the attempt. The mules were browsing quietly at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the corral.

Marching past the drove, I deployed the company in the form of a semicircle, forming a complete cordon round the animals; then, closing in upon them slowly, the soldiers commenced driving them towards the pen.

We were somewhat awkward at this new duty; but by means of a shower of small rocks, pieces of *bois de vache*,

and an occasional "heigh, heigh!" the mules were soon in motion and in the required direction.

The major, with Doc and little Jack, being the mounted men of the party, did great service, especially Jack, who was highly delighted with this kind of thing, and kept Twidget in a constant gallop from right to left.

As the *mulada* neared the gates of the enclosure, the two extremes of the semi-circumference gradually approached each other, closing in toward the corral.

The mules were already within fifty paces of the entrance the soldiers coming up about two hundred yards in the rear, when a noise like the tramping of many hoofs arrested our attention. The quick sharp note of a cavalry bugle rang out across the plain, followed by a wild yell, as though a band of Indian warriors were swooping down upon the foe.

In an instant every eye were turned, and we beheld with consternation a cloud of horsemen springing out from the woods, and dashing along in the headlong velocity of a charge.

It required but a single glance to satisfy me that they were guerilleros. Their picturesque attire, their peculiar arms, and the parti-colored bannerets upon their lances were not to be mistaken.

We stood for a moment as if thunder-struck; a sharp cry rose along the deployed line.

I signaled to the bugler, who gave the command, "Rally upon the center!"

As if by one impulse, the whole line closed in with a run upon the gates of the enclosure. The mules, impelled by the sudden rush, dashed forward pell-mell, blocking up the entrance.

On came the guerilleros, with streaming pennons and lances couched, shouting their wild cries:

"*Andela! andela! Mueran los Yankees!*" (Forward! forward! Death to the Yankees!)

The foremost of the soldiers were already upon the heels

of the crowded mules, pricking them with bayonets. The animals began to kick and plunge in the most furious manner causing a new danger in front.

"Face about—fire!" I commanded at this moment.

An irregular but well-directed volley emptied half a dozen saddles, and for a moment staggered the charging line; but, before my men could reload, the guerilleros had leaped clear over their fallen comrades, and were swooping down with cries of vengeance. A dozen of their bravest men were already within shot range, firing their escopettes and pistols as they came down.

Our position had now grown fearfully critical. The mules still blocked up the entrance, preventing the soldiers from taking shelter behind the stockade; and before we could reload, the rearmost would be at the mercy of the enemy's lances.

Seizing the major's servant by the arm, I dragged him from his horse, and, leaping into the saddle, flung myself upon the rear. Half a dozen of my bravest men, among whom were Lincoln, Chane, and the Frenchman Raoul, rallied around the horse, determined to receive the cavalry charge on the short bayonets of their rifles. Their pieces were all empty!

At this moment my eye rested on one of the soldiers, a brave but slow-footed German, who was still twenty paces in the rear of his comrades, making every effort to come up. Two of the guerilleros were rushing upon him with couched lances. I galloped out to his rescue; but before I could reach him the lance of the foremost Mexican crashed through the soldier's skull, shivering it like a shell. The barb and bloody pennon came out on the opposite side. The man was lifted from the ground, and carried several paces upon the shaft of the lance.

The guerillero dropped his entangled weapon; but before he could draw any other, the sword of Victoria was through his heart.

His comrade turned upon me with a cry of vengeance.

I had not yet disengaged my weapon to ward off the thrust. The lance's point was within three feet of my breast, when a sharp crack was heard from behind; the lancer threw out his arms with a spasmodic jerk; his long spear was whirled into the air, and he fell back in his saddle, dead.

"Well done, Jack! fire and scissors! who showed yer that trick? whooray! whoop!" and I heard the voice of Lincoln, in a sort of Indian yell, rising high above the din.

At this moment a guerillo, mounted upon a powerful black mustang, came galloping down. This man, unlike most of his comrades, was armed with the saber, which he evidently wielded with great dexterity. He came dashing on, his white teeth set in a fierce smile.

"Ha! Monsieur le Capitaine," shouted he, as he came near, "still alive? I thought I had finished you on Lobos; not too late yet."

I recognized the deserter, Dubrosc!

"Villain!" I ejaculated, too full of rage to utter another word.

We met at full speed, but with my unmanageable horse I could only ward off his blow as he swept past me. We wheeled again, and galloped towards each other—both of us impelled by hatred; but my horse again shied, frightened by the gleaming saber of my antagonist. Before I could rein him round, he had brought me close to the pickets of the corral; and on turning to meet the deserter, I found that we were separated by a band of dark objects.

It was a detachment of mules, that had backed from the gates of the corral and were escaping to the open plain. We reined up, eyeing each other with impatient vengeance; but the bullets of my men began to whistle from the pickets; and Dubrosc, with a threatening gesture, wheeled his horse and galloped off to his comrades. They had retired beyond range, and were halted in groups upon the prairie, chafing with disappointment and rage.

CHAPTER XXI.

A HERCULEAN FEAT.

THE whole skirmish did not occupy two minutes. It was like most charges of Mexican cavalry—a dash, a wild yelling, half a dozen empty saddles, and a hasty retreat.

The guerilleros had swerved off as soon as they perceived that we had gained a safe position, and the bullets of our reloaded pieces began to whistle around their ears. Dubrosc alone, in his impetuosity, galloped close up to the enclosure; and it was only on perceiving himself alone, and the folly of exposing himself thus fruitlessly, that he wheeled round and followed the Mexicans. The latter were now out upon the prairie, beyond the range of small-arms, grouped around their wounded comrades, or galloping to and fro, with yells of disappointed vengeance.

I entered the corral, where most of my men had sheltered themselves behind the stockades. Little Jack sat upon Twidget, reloading his rifle, and trying to appear insensible to the flattering encomiums that hailed him from all sides. A compliment from Lincoln, however, was too much for Jack, and a proud smile was seen upon the face of the boy.

"Thank you, Jack," said I, as I passed him; "I see you can use a rifle to some purpose."

Jack held down his head, without saying a word, and appeared to be very busy about the lock of his piece.

In the skirmish, Lincoln had received the scratch of a lance, at which he was chafing in his own peculiar way, and vowing revenge upon the giver. It might be said that he had taken this, as he had driven his short bayonet through his antagonist's arm, and sent him off with this member hanging by his side.

But the hunter was not content; and, as he retired sullenly into the enclosure, he turned round, and, shaking his fist at the Mexican, muttered savagely:

"Yer darned skunk! I'll know yer agin. See if I don't git yer yit!"

Gravenitz, a Prussian soldier, had also been too near a lance, and several others had received slight wounds. The German was the only one killed. He was still lying out on the plain, where he had fallen, the long shaft of the lance standing up out of his skull. Not ten feet distant lay the corpse of his slayer, glistening in its gaudy and picturesque attire.

The other guerillero, as he fell, had noosed one of his legs in the lazo that hung from the horn of his saddle, and was now dragged over the prairie after his wild and snorting mustang. As the animal swerved, at every jerk his limber body bounded to the distance of twenty feet, where it would lie motionless until slung into the air by a fresh pluck on the lazo.

As we were watching this horrid spectacle, several of the guerilleros galloped after, while half a dozen others were observed spurring their steeds towards the rear of the corral. On looking in this direction we perceived a huge red horse, with an empty saddle, scouring at full speed across the prairie. A single glance showed us that this horse was Hercules.

"Good heavens! the major!"

"Safe somewhere," replied Clayley; "but where the deuce can he be? He is not *hors de combat* on the plain, or one could see him even ten miles off. Ha! ha! ha!—look yonder!"

Clayley, yelling with laughter, pointed to the corner of the rancho.

Though after a scene so tragic, I could hardly refrain from joining Clayley in his boisterous mirth. Hanging by the belt of his saber upon a high picket was the major, kicking and struggling with all his might. The waist-strap, tightly drawn by the bulky weight of the wearer, separated his body into two vast rotundities, while his face was distorted and purple with the agony of suspense and suspension. He was loudly bellowing for help, and several soldiers were running towards him; but, from the manner in which he jerked his body up, and screwed his neck, so as to enable him to look over the stockade, it was evident that the principal cause of his uneasiness lay on the "other side of the fence."

The truth was, the major, on the first appearance of the enemy, had galloped towards the rear of the corral, and, finding no entrance, had thrown himself from the back of Hercules upon the stockade, intending to climb over; but, having caught a glance of some guerilleros, he had suddenly let go his bridle, and attempted to precipitate himself into the corral.

His waist-belt, catching upon a sharp picket, held him suspended midway, still under the impression that the Mex-

icans were close upon his rear. He was soon unhooked, and now waddled across the corral, uttering a thick and continuous volley of his choicest oaths.

Our eyes were now directed towards Hercules. The horsemen had closed upon him within fifty yards, and were winding their long lazos in the air. The major, to all appearance, had lost his horse.

After galloping to the edge of the woods, Hercules suddenly halted, and threw up the trailing bridle with a loud neigh. His pursuers, coming up, flung out their lazos. Two of these, settling over his head noosed him around the neck. The huge brute, as if aware of the necessity of a desperate effort to free himself, dropped his nose to the ground, and stretched himself out in full gallop

The lariats, one by one tightening over his bony chest, snapped like threads, almost jerking the mustangs from their feet. The long fragments sailed out like streamers as he careered across the prairie, far ahead of his yelling pursuers.

He now made directly for the corral. Several of the soldiers ran towards the stockade, in order to seize the bridle when he should come up ; but Hercules, spying his old comrade—the horse of the "doctor," —within the enclosure, first neighed loudly, and then, throwing all his nerve into the effort, sprang high over the picket fence.

A cheer rose from the men, who had watched with interest his efforts to escape, and who now welcomed him as if he had been one of themselves.

"Two months' pay for your horse, major!" cried Clayley.

"Och, the bewtiful baste! He's worth the full of his skin in goold. By my sowl! the capten ought to have 'im." ejaculated Chane ; and various other encomiums were uttered in honor of Hercules.

Meanwhile, his pursuers, not daring to approach the stockade, drew off towards their comrades, with gestures of disappointment and chagrin.

A Bridge in Spanish America.

CHAPTER XXII.

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET.

BEGAN to reflect upon the real danger of our situation—corralled upon a naked prairie, ten miles from camp, with no prospect of escape. I knew that we could defend ourselves against twice the number of our cowardly adversaries; they would never dare to come within range of our rifles. But how to get out? how to cross the open plain? Fifty infantry against four times that number of mounted men—lancers at that—and not a bush to shelter the foot soldier from the long spear and the iron hoof!

The nearest motte was half a mile off, and that another half a mile from the edge of the woods. Even could the motte be reached by a desperate run, it would be impossible to gain the woods, as the enemy would certainly cordon our new

position, and thus completely cut us off. At present they had halted in a body about four hundred yards from the corral; and, feeling secure of having us in a trap, most of them had dismounted, and were running out their mustangs upon their lazos. It was plainly their determination to take us by siege.

To add to our desperate circumstances, we discovered that there was not a drop of water in the corral. The thirst that follows a fight had exhausted the scanty supply of our canteens, and the heat was excessive.

As I was running over in my mind the perils of our position, my eye rested upon Lincoln, who stood with his piece at a carry, his left hand crossed over his breast, in the attitude of a soldier waiting to receive orders.

"Well, sergeant, what is it?" I inquired.

"Will yer allow me, cap'n, ter take a couple o' files, and fetch in the Dutchman? The men 'ud like ter put a sod upon him afore them thievin' robbers kin git at him."

"Certainly. But will you be safe? He's at some distance from the stockade."

"I don't think them fellers 'll kum down—they've had enuf o' it just now. We'll run out quick, and the boys kin kiver us with their fire."

"Very well, then; set about it."

Lincoln returned to the company, and selected four of the most active of his men, with whom he proceeded towards the entrance. I ordered the soldiers to throw themselves on that side of the enclosure, and cover the party in case of an attack; but none was made. A movement was visible among the Mexicans, as they perceived Lincoln and his party rush out towards the body; but, seeing they would be too late to prevent them from carrying it off, they wisely kept beyond the reach of the American rifles.

The body of the German was brought into the enclosure and buried with due ceremony, although his comrades be-

lieved that before many hours it would be torn from its "warrior grave," dragged forth to feed the coyoté and vulture, and his bones left to whiten upon the naked prairie. Which of us knew that it might not in a few hours be his own fate?

"Gentlemen," said I to my brother officers, as we came together, "can you suggest any mode of escape?"

"Our only chance is to fight them where we stand. There are four to one," replied Clayley.

"We have no other chance, captain," said Oakes, with a shake of the head.

"But it is not their intention to fight *us*. Their design is to starve us. See! they are picketing their horses, knowing they can easily overtake us if we attempt to leave the enclosure."

"Cannot we move in a hollow square?"

"But what is a hollow square of fifty men? and against four times that number of cavalry, with lances and lazos? No, no; they would shiver it with a single charge. Our only hope is, that we may be able to hold out until our absence from camp may bring a detachment to our relief.

"And why not send for it?" inquired the major, who had scarcely been asked for his advice, but whose wits had been sharpened by the extremity of his danger. "Why not send for a couple of regiments?"

"How are we to send, major?" asked Clayley, looking on the major's proposition as ludicrous under the circumstances.

"Have you a pigeon in your pocket?"

"Why?—how? There's Hercules runs like a hare; stick one of your fellows in the saddle, and I'll warrant him to camp in an hour."

"You are right, major," said I, catching at the major's proposal; "thank you for the thought. If he could only pass that point in the woods! I hate it, but it is our only chance."

The last sentence I muttered to myself.

"Why do you hate it, captain?" inquired the major, who had overheard me.

"You might not understand my reasons, major."

I was thinking upon the disgrace of being trapped as I was, and on my first scout, too.

"Who will volunteer to ride an express to camp?" I inquired, addressing the men.

Twenty of them leaped out simultaneously.

"Which of you remembers the course, that you could follow it in a gallop?" I asked.

The Frenchman, Raoul, stood forth, touching his cap.

"I know a shorter one, captain, by Mata Cordera."

"Ha! Raoul, you know the country? You are the man."

I now remembered that this man joined us at Sacrificios, just after the landing of the expedition. He had been living in the country previous to our arrival, and was well acquainted with it.

"Are you a good horseman?" I inquired.

"I have seen five years of cavalry service."

"True. Do you think you can pass them? They are nearly in your track."

"As we entered the prairie, captain; but my route will lie past this motte to the left."

"That will give you several points. Do not stop a moment after you have mounted, or they will take the hint and intercept you."

"With the red horse there will be no danger, captain."

"Leave your gun; take these pistols. Ha! you have a pair in the holsters. See if they are loaded. These spurs—so—cut loose that heavy piece from the saddle; the cloak, too; you must have nothing to encumber you. When you come near the camp, leave your horse in the chapparal. Give this to Colonel C——."

I wrote the following words on a scrap of paper:

"DEAR COLONEL,

"Two hundred will be enough. Could they be stolen out after night? If so, all will be well—if it gets abroad . . . .

"Yours,
"H. H."

As I handed the paper to Raoul, I whispered in his ear—

"To Colonel C——'s own hand. Privately, Raoul—privately, do you hear?"

Colonel C—— was my friend, and I knewt hat he would send a *private* party to my rescue.

"I understand, captain," was the answer of Raoul.

"Ready, then! now mount and be off."

The Frenchman sprang nimbly to the saddle, and, driving his spurs into the flanks of his horse, shot out from the pen like a bolt of lightning.

For the first three hundred yards or so he galloped directly towards the guerilleros. These stood leaning upon their saddles, or lay stretched along the greensward. Seeing a single horseman riding towards them, few of them moved, believing him to be some messenger sent to treat for our surrender.

Suddenly the Frenchman swerved from his direct course, and went sweeping around them in the curve of an ellipse.

They now perceived the *ruse*, and with a yell leaped into their saddles. Some fired their escopettes; others, unwinding their lazos, started in pursuit.

Raoul had by this time set Hercules's head for the clump of timber which he had taken as his guide, and now kept on in a track almost rectilinear. Could he but reach the motte or clump in safety, he knew that there were straggling trees beyond, and these would secure him in some measure from the lazos of his pursuers.

We stood watching his progress with breathless silence. Our lives depended on his escape. A crowd of the guerilleros was between him and us; but we could still see the green jacket of the soldier, and the great red flanks of Hercules, as he bounded on towards the edge of the woods. Then we saw the lazos launched out, and spinning around Raoul's head; and straggling shots were fired; and we fancied at one time that our comrade sprang up in the saddle, as if he had been hit. Then he appeared again, all safe, rounding the little islet of timber, and the next moment he was gone from our sight. There followed a while of suspense—of terrible suspense—for the motte hid from view both pursuers and pursued. Every eye was straining towards the point where the horseman had disappeared, when Lincoln, who had climbed to the top of the rancho, cried out:

"He's safe, cap'n! The dod-rotted skunks air kummin' 'ithout him."

It was true. A minute after, the horsemen appeared round the motte, riding slowly back, with that air and attitude that betoken disappointment.

Modern Conveniences of Travel in Spanish America.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SHORT FIGHT AT "LONG SHOT."

THE escape of Raoul and Hercules produced an effect almost magical upon the enemy. Instead of the listless defensive attitude lately assumed, the guerilleros were now in motion like a nest of roused hornets, scouring over the plain and yelling like a war-party of Indians.

They did not surround the corral, as I had anticipated they would. They had no fear that we should attempt to escape; but they knew that, instead of the three days in which they expected to kill us with thirst at their leisure, they had not three hours left to accomplish that object. Raoul would reach the camp in little more than an hour's time, and either infantry or mounted men would be on them in two hours after.

Scouts were seen galloping off in the direction taken by Raoul, and others dashed into the woods on the opposite side of the prairie. All was hurry and scurry.

Along with Clayley I had climbed upon the roof of the rancho, to watch the motions of the enemy, and to find out, if possible, his intentions. We stood for some time without speaking, both of us gazing at the maneuvers of the guerilleros. They were galloping to and fro over the prairie, excited by the escape of Raoul.

"Splendidly done!" exclaimed my companion, struck with their graceful horsemanship. "One of those fellows, captain, as he sits, at this minute, would——"

"Ha! what——?" shouted he, suddenly turning and pointing towards the woods.

I looked in the direction indicated. A cloud of dust was visible at the *débouchement* of the Medellin road. It appeared to hang over a small body of troops upon the march. The sun was just setting; and, as the cloud lay towards the west, I could distinguish the sparkling of bright objects through its dun volume. The guerilleros had reined up their horses, and were eagerly gazing towards the same point.

Presently the dust was wafted aside—a dozen dark forms became visible—and in the midst a bright object flashed under the sun like a sheet of gold. At the same instant an insulting shout broke from the guerilleros and a voice was heard exclaiming:

"*Cenobio! Cenobio! Los canones!*" (Cenobio! Cenobio! the cannon!)

Clayley turned towards me with an inquiring look.

"It is true, Clayley; by Heavens, we'll have it now!"

"What did they say?"

"Look for yourself—well?"

"A brass piece, as I live!—a six-pound carronade!"

"We are fighting the guerilla of Cenobio, a small army of itself. Neither stockade nor motte will avail us now."

"What is to be done?" asked my companion.

"Nothing but die with arms in our hands. We will not die without a struggle, and the sooner we prepare for it the better."

"I leaped from the roof, and ordered the bugler to sound the *assembly*.

In a moment the clear notes rang out, and the soldiers formed before me in the corral.

"My brave comrades!" cried I, "they have got the advantage of us at last. They are bringing down a piece of artillery, and I fear these pickets will offer us but poor shelter. If we are driven out, let us strike for that island of timber; and, mark me—if we are broken, let every man fight his way as he best can, or die over a fallen enemy."

A determined cheer followed this short harangue, and I continued:

"But let us first see how they use their piece. It is a small one, and will not destroy us all at once. Fling yourselves down as they fire. By lying flat on your faces you may not suffer so badly. Perhaps we can hold the corral until our friends reach us. At all events we shall try."

Another cheer rang along the line.

"Great heaven, captain! it's terrible!" whispered the major.

"What is terrible?" I asked, feeling at the moment a contempt for this blaspheming coward.

"Oh! this—this business—such a fix to be——"

"Major! remember you are a soldier."

"Yes; and I wish I had resigned, as I intended to do, before this cursed war commenced."

"Never fear," said I, tempted to smile at the candor of his cowardice; "you'll drink wine at Hewlett's in a month. Get behind this log—it's the only point shot-proof in the whole stockade."

"Do you think, captain, it *will* stop a shot?"

Ay—from a siege gun. Look out, men, and be ready to obey orders!"

The six-pounder had now approached within five hundred yards of the stockade, and was leisurely being unlimbered in the midst of a group of the enemy's artillerists.

At this moment the voice of the major arrested my attention.

"Great heaven, captain! Why do you allow them to come so near?"

"How am I to prevent them?" I asked, with some surprise.

"Why, my rifle will reach farther than that. It might keep them off, I think."

"Major, you are dreaming!" said I. "They are two hundred yards beyond range of our rifles. If they would only come within that, we should soon send them back for you."

"But, captain, mine will carry twice the distance."

I looked at the major, under the belief that he had taken leave of his senses.

"It's a *zündnadel*, I assure you, and will kill at eight hundred yards."

"Is it possible?" cried I, starting; for I now recollected the curious-looking piece which I had ordered to be cut loose from the saddle of Hercules. "Why did you not tell me that before? Where is Major Blossom's rifle?" I shouted, looking around.

"This hyur's the major's *gun*," answered Sergeant Lincoln. "But if it's a rifle, I never seed sich. It looks more like a two-year old cannon."

It was, as the major had declared, a Prussian needle-gun —then a new invention, but of which I had heard something.

"Is it loaded, major?" I asked, taking the piece from Lincoln.

"It is."

"Can you hit that man with the sponge?" said I, returning the piece to the hunter.

"If this hyur thing 'll carry fur enuf, I kin," was the reply.

"It will kill at a thousand yards, point blank," cried the major, with energy.

"Ha! are you sure of that, major?" I asked.

"Certainly, captain. I got it from the inventor. We tried it at Washington. It is loaded with a conical bullet. It bored a hole through an inch plank at that distance."

"Well. Now, sergeant, take sure aim; this may save us yet."

Lincoln planted himself firmly on his feet, choosing a notch of the stockade that ranged exactly with his shoulder. He then carefully wiped the dust from the sights; and, placing the heavy barrel in the notch, laid his cheek slowly against the stock.

"Sergeant, the man with the shot!" I called out.

As I spoke, one of the artillerists was stooping to the muzzle of the six-pounder, holding in his hand a spherical case-shot. Lincoln pressed the trigger. The crack followed, and the artillerist threw out his arms, and doubled over on his head without giving a kick.

The shot that he had held rolled out upon the greensward. A wild cry, expressive of extreme astonishment, broke from the guerilleros. At the same instant a cheer rang through the corral.

"Well done!" cried a dozen of voices at once.

In a moment the rifle was wiped and reloaded.

"This time, sergeant, the fellow with the linstock."

During the reloading of the rifle, the Mexicans around the six-pounder had somewhat recovered from their surprise, and had rammed home the cartridge. A tall artillerist stood, with linstock and fuse, near the breech, waiting for the order to fire.

Before he received that order the rifle again cracked; his arm flew up with a sudden jerk, and the smoking rod, flying from his grasp, was projected to the distance of twenty feet.

The man himself spun round, and, staggering a pace or two, fell into the arms of his comrades.

"Cap'n, jest allow me ter take that ere skunk next time."

"Which one, sergeant?" I asked.

"Him thet's on the black, makin' such a dot-rotted muss."

I recognized the horse and figure of Dubrosc.

"Certainly, by all means," said I, with a strange feeling at my heart as I gave the order.

But before Lincoln could reload, one of the Mexicans, apparently an officer, had snatched up the burning fuse, and, running up, applied it to the touch.

"On your faces, men!"

The ball came crashing through the thin pickets of the corral, and, whizzing across the enclosure, struck one of the mules on the flank, tearing open its hip, causing it to kick furiously as it tumbled over the ground.

Its companions, stampeding, galloped for a moment through the pen; then, collecting in a corner, stood cowered up and quivering. A fierce yell announced the exultation of the guerilleros.

Dubrosc was sitting on his powerful mustang, facing the corral, and watching the effects of the shot.

"If he wur only 'ithin range ov my own rifle!" muttered Lincoln, as he glanced along the sights of the strange piece.

The crack soon followed—the black horse reared, staggered, and fell back on his rider.

"Ten strike, set 'em up!" exclaimed a soldier.

"Missed the skunk—confound him!" cried Lincoln, gritting his teeth as the horseman was seen to struggle from under the fallen animal.

Rising to his feet, Dubrosc sprang out to the front, and shook his fist in the air with a shout of defiance.

The guerilleros galloped back; and the artillerists wheeling the six-pounder, dragged it after, and took up a new position about three hundred yards farther to the rear.

A second shot from the piece again tore through the pickets, striking one of our men, and killing him instantly.

"Aim at the artillerists, sergeant. We have nothing to fear from the others."

Lincoln fired again. The shot hit the ground in front of the enemy's gun; but, glancing, it struck one of the cannoniers, apparently wounding him badly, as he was carried back by his comrades.

The Mexicans, terror-struck at this strange instrument of destruction, took up a new position, two hundred yards still farther back.

Their third shot ricocheted, striking the top of the strong plank behind which the major was screening himself, and only frightening the latter by the shock upon the timber.

Lincoln again fired.

This time his shot produced no visible effect, and a taunting cheer from the enemy told that they felt themselves beyond range.

Another shot was fired from *zündnabel*, apparently with a similar result.

"It's beyond her carry, cap'n," said Lincoln, bringing the butt of his piece to the ground, with an expression of reluctant conviction.

"Try one more shot. If it fail, we can reserve the other for closer work. Aim high!"

This resulted as the two preceding ones; and a voice from the guerilleros was heard exclaiming:

"*Yankees bobos! mas adelante!*" (A little farther, you Yankee fools!)

Another shot from the six-pounder cracked through the planks, knocking his piece from the hands of a soldier, and shivering the dry stock-wood into fifty fragments.

"Sergeant, give me the rifle," said I. "They must be a thousand yards off; but, as they are as troublesome with that carronade as if they were only ten, I shall try one more shot."

I fired, but the ball sank at least fifty paces in front of the enemy.

"We expect too much. It is not a twenty-four pounder. Major, I envy you two things—your rifle and your horse."

"Hercules?"

"Of course."

"Lord, captain! you may do what you will with the rifle; and if ever we get out of the reach of these infernal devils, Hercules shall be——"

At this moment a cheer came from the guerilleros, and a voice was heard shouting above the din:

"*La metralla! la metralla!*" (The howitzer!)

I leaped upon the roof, and looked out upon the plain. It was true. A howitzer-carriage, drawn by mules, was debouching from the woods, the animals dragging it along at a gallop.

It was evidently a piece of some size, large enough to tear the light picketing that screened us to atoms.

I turned towards my men with a look of despair. My eye at this moment rested on the drove of mules that stood crowded together in a corner of the pen. A sudden thought struck me. Might we not mount them and escape? There were more than enough to carry us all, and the rancho was filled with bridles and ropes. I instantly leaped from the roof, and gave orders to the men.

"Speedily, but without noise!" cried I, as the soldiers proceeded to fling bridles upon the necks of the animals.

In five minutes each man, with his rifle slung, stood by a mule, some of them having buckled on *tapadas*, to prevent the animals from kicking.

The major stood ready by his horse.

"Now, my brave fellows," shouted I in a loud voice, "we must take it cavalry fashion—Mexican cavalry, I mean." The men laughed. "Once in the woods, we shall retreat no farther. At the words "*Mount and follow*," spring to your seats and follow Mr. Clayley. I shall look to your rear don't stop to fire—hold on well. If any one fall, let his nearest comrade take him up. Ha! anyone hurt there?" A shot had whistled through the ranks. "Only a scratch," was the reply.

"All ready, then, are you? Now, Mr. Clayley, you see the high timber—make direct for that. Down with the bars! '*Mount and follow!*'"

As I uttered the last words, the men leaped to their seats; and Clayley, riding the bell-mule, dashed out of the corral, followed by the whole train, some of them plunging and kicking, but all galloped forward at the sound of the bell upon their guide.

As the dark cavalcade rushed out upon the prairie, a wild cry from the guerilleros told that this was the first intimation they had had of the singular *ruse*. They sprang to their saddles with yells, and galloped in pursuit. The howitzer, that had been trailed upon the corral, was suddenly wheeled about and fired; but the shot, ill-directed in their haste, whistled harmlessly over our heads.

The guerilleros, on their swift steeds, soon lessened the distance between us.

With a dozen of the best men I hung in the rear, to give the foremost of the pursuers a volley, or pick up any soldier who might be tossed from his mule. One of these, at intervals, kicked as only a Mexican mule can; and when within five hundred yards of the timber, his rider, an Irishman, was flung upon the prairie.

The rearmost of our party stopped to take him up. He was seized by Chane, who mounted him in front of himself. The delay had nearly been fatal. The pursuers were already

within a hundred yards, firing their pistols and escopettes without effect. A number of the men turned in their seats and blazed back. Others threw their rifles over their shoulders, and pulled trigger at random. I could perceive that two or three guerilleros dropped from their saddles. Their comrades, with shouts of vengeance, closed upon us nearer and nearer. The long lazos, far in advance, whistled around our heads.

I felt the slippery noose light upon my shoulders. I flung out my arms to throw it off, but with a sudden jerk it tightened around my neck. I clutched the hard thong, and pulled with all my might. It was in vain.

The animal I rode, freed from my *manège*, seemed to plunge under me, and gather up its back with a vicious determination to fling me. It succeeded; and I was launched in the air, and dashed to the earth with a stunning violence.

I felt myself dragged along the gravelly ground. I grasped the weeds, but they came away in my hands, torn up by the roots. There was a struggle above and around me. I could hear loud shouts and the firing of guns. I felt that I was being strangled.

A bright object glistened before my eyes. I felt myself seized by a strong rough hand, and swung into the air and rudely shaken, as if in the grasp of some giant's arm.

Something twitched me sharply over the cheeks. I heard the rustling of trees. Branches snapped and crackled, and leaves swept across my face. Then came the flash—flash, and the crack—crack—crack of a dozen rifles, and under their blazing light I was dashed a second time with violence to the earth.

The Jornada, or Journey of Death, Northern Mexico.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESCUE.

ROUGH handlin', cap'n. Yer must excuse haste."

It was the voice of Lincoln.

"Ha! in the timber? Safe, then!" ejaculated I in return.

"Two or three wounded—not bad neither. Chane has got a stab in the hip—he gin the feller goss for it. Let me louze the darn thing off o' your neck. It kum mighty near chokin' yer, capt'n."

Bob proceeded to unwind the noose end of a lazo that, with some six feet of a raw hide thong, was still tightly fastened around my neck.

"But who cut the rope?" demanded I.

"I did, with this hyur toothpick. Yer see, cap'n, it wasn't yer time to be hung just yet."

I could not help smiling as I thanked the hunter for my safety.

"But where are the guerilleros?" asked I, looking around, my brain still somewhat confused.

"Yander they are, keepin' safe out o' range o' this long gun. Just listen to 'em!—what a hillerballoo!"

The Mexican horsemen were galloping out on the prairie, their arms glistening under the clear moonlight.

"Take to the trees, men!" cried I, seeing that the enemy had again unlimbered, and were preparing to discharge their howitzer.

In a moment the iron shower came whizzing through the branches without doing any injury, as each of the men had covered his body with a tree. Several of the mules that stood tied and trembling were killed by the discharge.

Another shower hurtled through the bushes, with a similar effect.

I was thinking of retreating farther into the timber, and was walking back to reconnoiter the ground, when my eye fell upon an object that arrested my attention. It was the body of a very large man lying flat upon his face, his head buried among the roots of a good-sized tree. The arms were stiffly pressed against his sides, and the legs projected at full stretch, exhibiting an appearance of motionless rigidity, as though a well-dressed corpse had been rolled over on its face. I at once recognized it as the body of the major, whom I supposed to have fallen dead where he lay.

"Good heavens! Clayley, look here" cried I; "poor Blossom's killed!"

"No, I'll be hanged if I am!" growled the latter, screwing his neck round like a lizard, and looking up without changing the attitude of his body. Clayley was convulsed

with laughter. The major sheathed his head again, as he knew that another shot from the howitzer might soon be expected.

"Major," cried Clayley, "that right shoulder of yours projects over at least six inches."

"I know it," answered the major, in a frightened voice. "dog gone the tree!—it's hardly big enough to cover a squirrel;" and he squatted closer to the earth, pressing his arms tighter against his sides. His whole attitude was so ludicrous that Clayley burst into a second yell of laughter.

At this moment a wild shout was heard from the guerilleros.

"What next?" cried I, running toward the front, and looking out upon the prairie.

"Them wildcats are gwine to cl'ar out, cap'n," said Lincoln, meeting me. "I kin see them hitchin' up."

"It is as you say! What can be the reason?"

A strange commotion was visible in the groups of horsemen. Scouts were galloping across the plain to a point of the woods about half a mile distant, and I could see the artillerists fastening their mules to the howitzer-carriage. Suddenly a bugle rang out, sounding the "Recall," and the guerilleros, spurring their horses, galloped off toward Nedellin.

A loud cheer, such as was never uttered by Mexican throats, came from the opposite edge of the prairie; and looking in that direction, I beheld a long line of dark forms debouching from the woods at a gallop. Their sparkling blades, as they issued from the dark forest, glistened like a cordon of fireflies, and I recognized the heavy footfall of the American horse. A cheer from my men attracted their attention; and the leader of the dragoons, seeing that the guerilleros had got far out of reach, wheeled his column to the right and came galloping down.

"Is that Colonel Rawley?" inquired I, recognizing a dragoon officer.

"Why, bless my soul, H——!" exclaimed he, "how did you get out? We heard you were jugged. All alive yet?"

"We have lost two," I replied.

"Pah! that's nothing. I came out expecting to bury the whole kit of you. Here's Clayley, too. Clayley, your friend Twing's with us; you'll find him in the rear."

"Ha! Clayley, old boy!" cried Twing, coming up; "no bones broken? all right? Take a pull; do you good—don't drink it all, though—leave a thimbleful for Haller there. How do you like that?"

"Delicious, by Jove!" ejaculated Clayley, tugging away at the Georgia major's flask.

"Come, captain, try it."

"Thank you," I replied, eagerly grasping the welcome flask.

"But where is old Blos? killed, wounded or missing?"

"I believe the major is not far off, and still uninjured."

I despatched a man for the major, who presently came up blowing and swearing like a Flanders trooper.

"Hilloa, Blos!" shouted Twing, grasping him by the hand.

"Why, bless me, Twing, I'm glad to see you!" answered Blossom, throwing his arms around the diminutive major. "But where on earth is your pewter?" for during the embrace he had been groping all over Twing's body for the flask.

"Here, Cudjo! That flask, boy!"

"Faith, Twing, I'm near choked; we've been fighting all day—a devil of a fight! I chased a whole squad of the cussed scoundrels on Hercules, and came within a squirrel's jump of riding right into their nest. We've killed dozens; but Haller will tell you all. He's a good fellow, that Haller; but he's too rash—rash as blazes! Hilloa, Hercules! glad to see you again, old fellow; you had a sharp brush for it."

"Remember your promise, major," said I, as the major stood patting Hercules upon the shoulder.

"I'll do better, Captain. I'll give you a choice between

Hercules and a splendid black I have. Faith! it's hard to part with you, old Herky, but I know the captain will like the black better: he's the handsomest horse in the whole army; bought him from poor Ridgely, who was killed at Monterey."

This speech of the major was delivered partly in soliloquy, partly in an apostrophe to Hercules, and partly to myself.

"Very well, major," I replied. "I'll take the black. Mr. Clayley, mount the men on their mules: you will take command of the company, and proceed with Colonel Rawley to camp. I shall go myself for the Don."

The last was said in a whisper to Clayley.

"We may not get in before noon to-morrow. Say nothing of my absence to any one. I shall make my report at noon to-morrow."

"And, captain——" said Clayley.

"Well, Clayley?"

"You will carry back my——"

"What? To which friend?"

"Of course, to Mary of the Light."

"Oh, certainly!"

"In your best Spanish."

"Rest assured," said I, smiling at the earnestness of my friend.

I was about moving from the spot, when the thought occurred to me to send the company to camp under command of Oakes, and take Clayley along with me.

"Clayley, by the way," said I, calling the lieutenant back, "I don't see why you may not carry your compliments in person. Oakes can take the men back. I shall borrow half a dozen dragoons from Rawley."

"With all my heart," replied Clayley.

"Come, then; get a horse, and let us be off."

Taking Lincoln and Raoul, with half a dozen of Rawley's dragoons, I bade my friends good-night.

These started for camp by the road of Mata Cordera, while I with my little party brushed for some distance round the border of the prairie, and then climbed the hill, over which lay the path to the house of the Spaniard.

As I reached the top of the ridge I turned to look upon the scene of our late skirmish.

The cold, round moon, looking down upon the prairie of La Virgen, saw none of the victims of the fight.

The guerilleros in their retreat had carried off their dead and wounded comrades, and the Americans slept underground in the lone corral: but I could not help fancying that gaunt wolves were skulking round the enclosure, and that the claws of the coyoté were already tearing up the red earth that had been hurriedly heaped over their graves.

Boat Life in Tropical America.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COCUYO.

A NIGHT-RIDE through the golden tropical forest, when the moon is bathing its broad and wax-like frondage — when the winds are hushed and the long leaves hang drooping and silent— when the path conducts through dark aisles and arbors of green vine-leaves, and out again into bright and flowery glades—is one of those luxuries that I wish we could obtain without going beyond the limits of our own land.

But no. The romance of the American *northern* forest— the romance that lingers around the gnarled limbs of the oak, and the maple, and the elm—that sighs with the wintry wind high up among the twigs of the shining sycamore—that

flits along the huge fallen trunks—that nestles in the brown and rustling leaves—that hovers above the bold cliff and sleeps upon the gray rock—that sparkles in the diamond stalactites of the frost, or glides along the bosom of the cold black river—is a feeling or a fancy of a far different character.

These objects—themselves the emblems of the stony and iron things of nature—call up associations of the darker passions: strange scenes of strife and bloodshed; struggles between red and white savages; and struggles hardly less fierce with the wild beasts of the forest. The rifle, the tomahawk, and the knife are the visions conjured up, while the savage whoop and the dread yell echo in your ear; and you dream of *war*.

Far different are the thoughts that suggest themselves as you glide along under the aromatic arbors of the American *southern* forest, brushing aside the silken foliage, and treading upon the shadows of picturesque palms.

The cocuyo lights your way through the dark aisles, and the nightingale cheers you with his varied and mimic song. A thousand sights and sounds, that seem to be possessed of some mysterious and narcotic power, lull you into silence and sleep—a sleep whose dream is *love*.

Clayley and I felt this as we rode silently along. Even the ruder hearts of our companions seemed touched by the same influence.

We entered the dark woods that fringed the arroyo, and the stream was crossed in silence. Raoul rode in advance, acting as our guide.

After a long silence Clayley suddenly awoke from his reverie and straightened himself up in the saddle.

"What time is it, captain?" he inquired.

"Ten—a few minutes past," answered I, holding my watch under the moonlight.

"I wonder if the Don's in bed yet."

"Not likely: he will be in distress; he expected us an hour ago."

"True, he will not sleep till we come; all right then."

"How all right then?"

"For our chances of a supper; a cold pasty, with a glass of claret. What think you?"

"I do not feel hungry."

"But I do—as a hawk. I long once more to sound the Don's larder."

Puma, or American Lion of Mexico.

"Do you not long more to see——"

"Not to-night—no—that is, until after supper. Everything in its own time and place; but a man with a hungry stomach has no stomach for any thing but eating. I pledge you my word, Haller, I would rather at this moment see that grand old stewardess, Pepe, than the loveliest woman in Mexico, and that's 'Mary of the Light.'"

"Monstrous!"

"That is until after I have supped. Then my feelings will doubtless take a turn."

"Ah! Clayley, you can never love!"

"Why so, captain?"

"With you, love is a sentiment, not a passion. You regard the fair blonde as you would a picture or a curious ornament."

"You mean to say, then, that my love is "all in my eye?"

"Exactly so, in a literal sense. I do not think it has reached your heart, else you would not be thinking of your supper. Now, I could go for days without food—suffer any hardship; but, no, you cannot understand this."

"I confess not. I am too hungry."

"You could forget—nay, I should not be surprised if you have already forgotten—all but the fact that your mistress is a blonde, with bright golden hair. Is it not so?"

"I confess, captain, that I should make but a poor portrait of her from memory."

"And, were I a painter, I could throw *her* features upon the canvas as truly as if they were before me. I see her face outlined upon these broad leaves—her dark eyes burning in the flash of the cocuyo—her long black hair drooping from the feathery fringes of the palm—and her——"

"Stop! You are dreaming, captain! Her eyes are not dark—her hair is not black."

"What! Her eyes not dark?—as ebony or night!"

"Blue as a turquoise!"

"Black! What are you thinking of?"

"'Mary of the Light.'"

"Oh, that is quite a different affair!" and my friend and I laughed heartily at our mutual misconceptions.

We rode on, again relapsing into silence. The stillness of the night was broken only by the heavy hoof bounding back from the hard turf, the jingling of spurs, or the ringing of the iron scabbard as it struck against the moving flanks of our horses.

We had crossed the sandy spur, with its chapparal of

cactus and mezquite, and were entering a gorge of heavy timber, when the practised eye of Lincoln detected an object in the dark shadow of the woods, and communicated the fact to me.

"Halt!" cried I, in a low voice.

The party reigned up at the order. A rustling was heard in the bushes ahead.

"*Quien viva?*" challenged Raoul, in the advance.

"*Un amigo*" (A friend), was the response.

I sprang forward to the side of Raoul, and called out—

"*Acercate! acercate!*" (Come near!)

A figure moved out of the bushes, and approached.

"*Está el Capitan?*" (Is it the captain?)

I recognized the guide given me by Don Cosmé.

The Mexican approached, and handed me a small piece of paper. I rode into an opening, and held it up to the moonlight; but the writing was in pencil, and I could not make out a single letter.

"Try this, Clayley. Perhaps your eyes are better than mine."

"No," said Clayley, after examining the paper. "I can hardly see the writing upon it."

"*Esperate mi amo*" (Wait, my master), said the guide, making me a sign. We remained motionless.

The Mexican took from his head his heavy *sombrero*, and stepped into a darker recess of the forest. After standing for a moment, hat in hand, a brilliant object shot out from the leaves of the *palma redonda*. It was the cocuyo—the great firefly of the tropics. With a low humming sound it came glistening along at the height of seven or eight feet from the ground. The man sprang up, and with a sweep of his arm jerked it suddenly to the earth. Then, covering it with his hat, and inverting his hand, he caught the gleaming insect, and presented it to me with the ejaculation:

"*Ya!*" (Now!)

"*No muerde*" (It does not bite), added he, as he saw that I hesitated to touch the strange, beetle-shaped insect.

I took the cocuyo in my hand, the green, golden fire flashing from its great round eyes. I held it up before the writ-

Mexican Indians Hunting with the Native Air-gun.

ing, but the faint glimmer was scarcely discernible upon the paper.

"Why, it would require a dozen of these to make sufficient light," I said to the guide.

"*No, señor*; *uno basta—asi*" (No, sir; one is enough—thus); and the Mexican, taking the cocuyo in his fingers, pressed it gently against the surface of the paper. It produced a bril-

liant light, radiating over a circle of several inches in diameter!

Every point in the writing was plainly visible.

"See, Clayley!" cried I, admiring this lamp of Nature's own making. "Never trust the tales of travelers. I have heard that half a dozen of these insects in a glass vessel would enable you to read the smallest type. Is that true?" added I, repeating what I had said in Spanish.

"*No señor ni cincuenta*" (No, sir; nor fifty), replied the Mexican.

"And yet with a single cocuyo you may. But we are forgetting—let us see what's here."

I bent my head to the paper, and read in Spanish:

"*I have made known your situation to the American commander.*"

There was no signature nor other mark upon the paper.

"From Don Cosmé?" I inquired, in a whisper to the Mexican.

"Yes, señor," was the reply.

"And how did you expect to reach us in the corral?"

"*Asi*" (So), said the man holding up a shaggy bull's hide which he carried over his arm.

"We have friends here, Clayley. Come, my good fellow, take this!" and I handed a gold eagle to the peon.

"Forward!"

The tinkling of canteens, the jingling of sabers, and the echo of bounding hoofs recommenced. We were again in motion, filing on through the shadowy woods.

Mary of the Light.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LUPÉ AND LUZ.

SHORTLY after, we debouched from the forest, entering the open fields of Don Cosmé's plantation. There was a flowery brilliance, around us, full of novelty. We had been accustomed to the ruder scenes of a northern clime. The tropical moon threw a gauzy veil over objects that softened their outlines; and the notes of the nightingale were the only sounds that broke the stillness of what seemed a sleeping elysium.

Once a vanilla plantation, here and there the aromatic bean grew wild, its ground usurped by the pita-plant, the

acacia, and the thorny cactus. The dry reservoir and the ruined *acequia* proved the care that had in former times been bestowed on its irrigation. *Guardarayas* of palms and orange-trees, choked up with vines and jessamines, marked the ancient boundaries of the fields. Clusters of fruit and flowers hung from the drooping branches, and the aroma of a thousand sweet-scented shrubs was wafted upon the night air. We felt its narcotic influence as we rode along. The helianthus bowed its golden head as if weeping at the absence of its god; and the cereus spread its bell-shaped blossom, joying in the more mellow light of the moon.

The guide pointed to one of the guardarayas that led to the house. We struck into it, and rode forward. The path was pictured by the moonbeams as they glanced through the half-shadowing leaves. A wild roe bounded away before us, brushing his soft flanks against the rustling thorns of the mezquite.

Farther on we reached the grounds, and, halting behind the jessamines, dismounted. Clayley and myself entered the enclosure.

As we pushed through a copse we were saluted by the hoarse bark of a couple of mastiffs; and we could perceive several forms moving in front of the rancho. We stopped a moment to observe them.

"*Quitate, Carlo! Pompo!*" (Be off, Carlo! Pompo!) The dogs growled fiercely, barking at intervals.

"*Papa, mandalos!*" (Papa, order them off!)

We recognized the voices, and pressed forward.

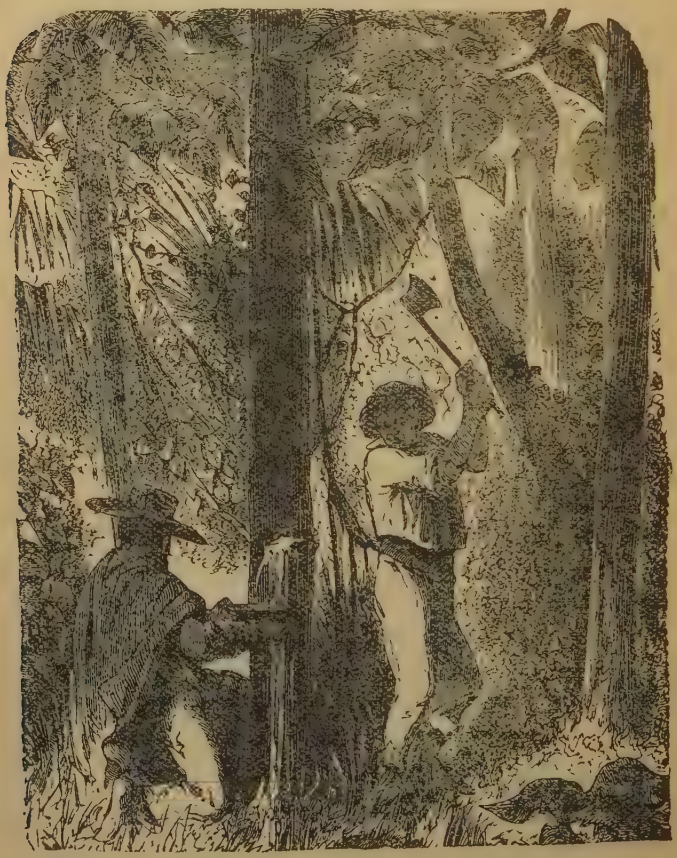
"*Afuera, malditos perros! abajo!*" (Out of the way, wicked dogs!—down!), shouted Don Cosmé, chiding the fierce brutes and driving them back.

The dogs were secured by several domestics and we advanced.

"*Quien es?*" inquired Don Cosmé.

"*Amigos*" (Friends), I replied.

"*Papa! papa! es el capitan!*" (Papa, it is the captain!) cried one of the sisters, who had run out in advance, and whom I recognized as the elder one.



Vegetable Milk from the Cow-tree of Tropical America.

"Do not be alarmed, señorita," said I, approaching.

"Oh! you are safe—you are safe!—papa, he is safe!"

cried both the girls at once; while Don Cosmé exhibited his joy by hugging my comrade and myself alternately.

Suddenly letting go, he threw up his hands, and inquired with a look of anxiety:

"*Y el señor gordo?*" (And the fat gentleman?)

"Oh! he's all right," replied Clayley, with a laugh; "he has saved his bacon, Don Cosmé; though I imagine about this time he wouldn't object to a little of yours."

I translated my companion's answer. The latter part of it seemed to act upon Don Cosmé as a hint, and we were immediately hurried to the dining-room, where we found the Doña Joaquina preparing supper.

During our meal I recounted the principal events of the day. Don Cosmé knew nothing of these guerilleros, although he had heard that there were bands in the neighborhood. Learning from the guide that we had been attacked, he had despatched a trusty servant to the American camp and Raoul had met the party coming to our rescue.

After supper Don Cosmé left us to give some orders relative to his departure in the morning. His lady set about preparing the sleeping apartments, and my companion and I were left for some time in the sweet companionship of Lupé and Luz.

Both were exquisite musicians, playing the harp and guitar with equal cleverness. Many a pure Spanish melody was poured into the delighted ears of my friend and myself. The thoughts that arose in our minds were doubtless of a similar kind; and yet how strange that our hearts should have been warmed to love by beings so different in character! The gay, free spirit of my comrade seemed to have met a responsive echo. He and his brilliant partner laughed, chatted, and sang in turns. In the incidents of the moment this light-hearted creature had forgotten her brother, yet the next moment she would weep for him. A tender heart—a heart of joys and sorrows—of ever-changing emotions, coming

and passinge kil shadows thrown by straggling clouds upon the sunlit stream!

Unlike was *our* converse—more serious. We may not laugh, lest we should profane the holy sentiment that is stealing upon us. There is no mirth in love. There are joy, pleasure, luxury; but laughter finds no echo in the heart that loves. Love is a feeling of anxiety—of expectation. The harp is set aside. The guitar lies untouched for a sweeter music—the music that vibrates from the strings of the heart. Are our eyes not held together by some invisible chain? Are not our souls in communion through some mysterious means? It is not language—at least, not the language of words; for we are conversing upon indifferent things—not indifferent, either. Narcisso, Narcisso—a theme fraternal. His peril casts a cloud over our happiness.

"Oh! that he were here—then we could be happy indeed."

"He will return; fear not—grieve not; to-morrow your father will easily find him. I shall leave no means untried to restore him to so fond a sister."

"Thanks! thanks! Oh! we are already indebted to you so much."

Are those eyes swimming with love, or gratitude, or both at once? Surely gratitude alone does not speak so wildly. Could this scene not last forever?

"Good-night—good-night!"

"*Senores, pasan Vds. buena noche!*" (Gentlemen, may you pass a pleasant night!)

They are gone, and those oval developments of face and figure are floating before me, as though the body itself were still present. It is the soft memory of love in all its growing distinctness!

* * * * * * *

We were shown to our sleeping apartments. Our men picketed their horses under the olives, and slept in the bamboo rancho, a single sentry walking his rounds during the night.

My Bed-Chamber at Don Cosme's.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A TOUGH NIGHT OF IT AFTER ALL.

I ENTERED my chamber—to sleep? No. And yet it contained a bed fit for Morpheus—a bed canopied and curtained with cloth from the looms of Damascus: shining rods roofed upwards, and met in an ornamental design, where the god of sleep, fanned by virgins of silver, reclined upon a couch of roses.

I drew aside the curtains—a bank of snow—pillows, as if prepared for the cheek of a beautiful bride. I had not slept in a bed for two months. A close crib in a transport ship—a "shake-down" among the scorpions and spiders of Lobos—a single blanket among the sand-hills, where it was not unusual to wake up half buried by the drift.

These were my *souvenirs*. Fancy the prospect! It certainly invited repose; and yet I was in no humor to sleep.

My brain was in a whirl. The strange incidents of the day —some of them were mysterious—crowded into my mind. My whole system, mental as well as physical, was flushed; and thought followed thought with nervous rapidity.

My heart shared the excitement—chords long silent had been touched—the divine element was fairly enthroned. I was in love!

It was not the first passion of my life, and I easily recognized it. Even jealousy had begun to distil its poison—"Don Santiago!"

I was standing in front of a large mirror, when I noticed two small miniatures hanging against the wall—one on each side of the glass.

I bent over to examine, first, that which hung upon the right. I gazed with emotion. They were *her* features; "and yet," thought I, "the painter has not flattered her; it might better represent her ten years hence: still, the likeness is there. Stupid artist!" I turned to the other. "Her fair sister, no doubt. Gracious heaven! Do my eyes deceive me? No, the black wavy hair—the arching brows—the sinister lip—*Dubrosc!*"

A sharp pang shot through my heart. I looked at the picture again and again with a kind of incredulous bewilderment; but every fresh examination only strengthened conviction. "There is no mistaking those features—they are his!" Paralyzed with the shock, I sank into a chair, my heart filled with the most painful emotions.

For some moments I was unable to think, much less to act.

"What can it mean? Is this accomplished villain a fiend?—the fiend of my existence?—thus to cross me at every point, perhaps in the end to——"

Our mutual dislike at first meeting—Lobos—his reappearance upon the sand-hills, the mystery of his passing the lines and again appearing with the guerilla—all came forcibly

upon my recollection; and now I seized the lamp and rushed back to the pictures.

"Yes, I am *not* mistaken; it is he—it is she, her features—all—all. And thus, too!—the position—side by side—counter-parts! There are no others on the wall; matched—mated—perhaps betrothed! His name, too, Don Emilio! The American who taught them English! *His* is Emile—the voice on the island cried 'Emile!' Oh, the coincidence is complete! This villain, handsome and accomplished as he is, has been here before me! Betrothed—perhaps married—perhaps— Torture! horrible!"

I reeled back to my chair, dashing the lamp recklessly upon the table. I know not how long I sat, but a world of wintry thoughts passed through my heart and brain. A clock striking from a large picture awoke me from my reverie. I did not count the hours. Music began to play behind the picture. It was a sad, sweet air, that chimed with my feelings, and to some extent soothed them. I rose at length, and, hastily undressing, threw myself upon the bed, mentally resolving to forget all—to forget that I had ever seen her.

"I will rise early—return to camp without meeting her, and, once there, my duties will drive away this painful fancy. The drum and the fife and the roar of the cannon will drown remembrance. Ha! it was only a passing thought at best—the hallucination of a moment. I shall easily get rid of it. Ha! ha!"

I laid my fevered cheek upon the soft, cold pillow. I felt composed—almost happy.

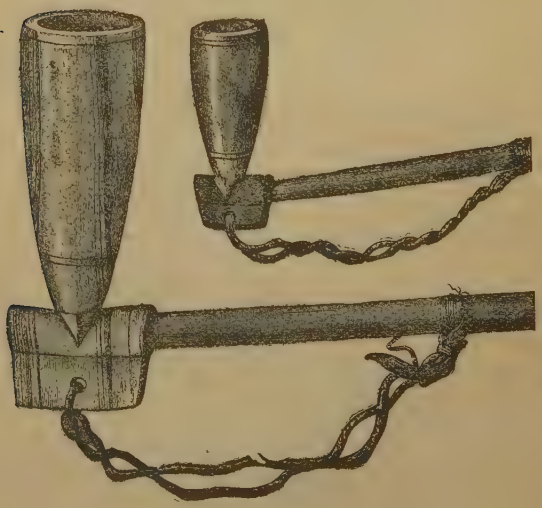
"A creole of New Orleans! How could he have been here? Oh! have I not the explanation already? Why should I dwell on it?"

A jealous heart—it is easy to say "forget."

I tried to prevent my thoughts from returning to this theme. I directed them to a thousand things: to the ships

—to the landing—to the army—to the soldiers—to the buttons upon their jackets and the swabs upon their shoulders—to everything I could think of: all in vain. Back, back, back! in painful throes it came, and my heart throbbed, and my brain burned with bitter memories freshly awakened.

I turned and tossed upon my couch for many a long hour. The clock in the picture struck, and played the same music again and again, still soothing me as before. Even despair has its moments of respite; and, worn with fatigue, mental as well as physical, I listened to the sad, sweet strain, until it died away into my dreams.



Hanging Nests of the Pensile Weaver Bird.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LIGHT AFTER THE SHADE.

WHEN I awoke all was darkness around me. I threw out my arms and opened the damask curtains. Not a ray of light entered the room. I felt refreshed, and from this I concluded I must have slept long. I slipped out upon the floor and commenced groping for my watch. Some one knocked.

"Come in!" I called.

The door opened, and a flood of light gushed into the apartment. It was a servant bearing a lamp.

"What is the hour?" I demanded.

"Nine o'clock, *mi amo*" (my master), was the reply.

The servant set down the lamp and went out. Another immediately entered, carrying a salver with a small gold cup.

"What have you there?"

"*Chocolaté*, master; Doña Joaquina has sent it."

I drank off the beverage, and hastened to dress myself. I was reflecting whether I should pass on to camp without seeing any one of the family. Somehow, my heart felt less heavy. I believe the morning always brings relief to pain, either mental or bodily. It seems to be a law of nature—at least, so my experience tells me. The morning air, buoyant and balmy, dulls the edge of anguish. New hopes arise and new projects appear with the sun. The invalid, couch-tossing through the long watches of the night, will acknowledge this truth.

I did not approach the mirror. I dared not.

"I will not look upon the loved, the hated face—no, on to the camp!—let Lethe—— Has my friend arisen?"

"Yes, master; he has been up for hours."

"Ha! where is he?"

"In the garden, master."

"Alone?"

"No, master; he is with the *niñas*?"

"Happy, light-hearted Clayley! No jealous thoughts to torture him!" mused I, as I buckled on my stock.

I had observed that the fair-haired sister and he were kindred spirits—sympathetic natures, who only needed to be placed *en rapport* to "like each other mightily"—beings who could laugh, dance, and sing together, romp for months, and then get married, as a thing of course; but, should any accident prevent this happy consummation, could say "good-by and part without a broken heart on either side; an easy thing for natures like theirs; a return exchange of numerous *billets-doux*, a laugh over the past, and a light heart for the

future. Such is the history of many a love. I can vouch for it. How different with——

"Tell my friend, when he returns to the house, that I wish to see him."

"Yes, master."

The servant bowed and left the room,

In a few minutes Clayley made his appearance, gay as a grasshopper.

"So, good lieutenant, you have been improving your time, I hear?"

"Haven't I, though? Such a delicious stroll! Haller, this *is* a paradise."

"Where have you been?"

"Feeding the swans," replied Clayley, with a laugh. "But, by the way, your *chère amie* hangs her pretty head this morning. She seems hurt that you have not been up. She kept constantly looking towards the house."

"Clayley, will you do me the favor to order the men to their saddles?"

"What! going so soon? Not before breakfast, though?"

"In five minutes."

"Why, captain, what's the matter? And such a breakfast as they are getting! Oh! Don Cosmé will not hear of it."

"Don Cosmé——"

Our host entered at that moment, and, listening to his remonstrances, the order was rescinded, and I consented to remain.

I saluted the ladies with as much courtesy as I could assume. I could not help the coldness of my manner, and I could perceive that with *her* it did not pass unobserved.

We sat down to the breaklast-table; but my heart was full of bitterness, and I scarcely touched the delicate viands that were placed before me.

"You do not eat, captain. I hope you are well?" said Don Cosmé, observing my strange and somewhat rude, demeanor.

"Thank you, señor, I never enjoyed better health."

I studiously avoided looking towards her, paying slight attentions to her sister. This is the game of piques. Once or twice I ventured a side-glance. Her eyes were bent upon me with a strange, inquiring look.

They are swimming in tears, and soft, and forgiving. They are swollen. She has been weeping. That is not strange. Her brother's danger is, no doubt, the cause of her sorrow.

Yet, is there not reproach in her looks? Reproach! How ill does my conduct of last night correspond with this affected coldness—this rudeness! Can she, too, be suffering?

I arose from the table, and, walking forth, ordered Lincoln to prepare the men for marching.

I strolled down among the orange trees. Clayley followed soon after, accompanied by both the girls. Don Cosmé remained at the house to superintend the saddling of his mule, while Doña Joaquina was packing the necessary articles into his portmanteau.

Following some silent instinct, we—Guadalupe and I—came together. Clayley and his mistress had strayed away, leaving us alone. I had not yet spoken to her. I felt a strange impulse—a desire to know the worst. I felt as one looking over a fearful precipice.

Then I will brave the danger; it can be no worse than this agony of suspicion and suspense.

I turned towards her. Her head was bent to one side. She was crushing an orange-flower between her fingers, and her eyes seemed to follow the dropping fragments.

How beautiful was she at that moment!

"The artist certainly has not flattered you."

She looked at me with a bewildered expression. Oh, those swimming eyes!

She did not understand me.

I repeated the observation.

"Señor capitan, what do you mean?"

"That the painter has not done you justice. The portrait is certainly a likeness, yet the expression, I think, should have been younger."

"The painter! What painter? The portrait? What portrait, señor?"

"I refer to your portrait, which I accidentally found hanging in my apartment."

"Ah! by the mirror?"

"Yes, by the mirror." I answered sullenly.

"But it is not *mine*, señor capitan."

"Ha!—how? Not yours!"

"No: it is the portrait of my cousin, Maria de Merced. They say we were much alike."

My heart expanded. My whole frame quivered under the influence of joyful emotions.

"And the gentleman?" I faltered out.

"Don Emilio? He was cousin's lover—*huyeron*" (they eloped).

As she repeated the last word, she turned her head away, and I thought there was a sadness in her manner.

I was about to speak, when she continued:

"It was her room—we have not touched anything."

"And where is your cousin now?"

"We know not."

"There is a mystery," thought I. I pressed the subject no farther. It was nothing to me now. My heart was happy.

"Let us walk farther, Lupita."

She turned her eyes upon me with an expression of wonder. The change in my manner—so sudden—how was she

to account for it? I could have knelt before her and explained all. Reserve disappeared, and the confidence of the preceding night was fully restored.

We wandered along under the *guard aruyas*, amidst sounds and scenes suggestive of love and tenderness. Love! We heard it in the songs of the birds—in the humming of the bees—in the voices of all nature around us. We felt it in our own hearts. The late cloud had passed, making the sky still brighter than before: the reaction had heightened our mutual passion to the intensity of non-resistance; and we walked on, her hand clasped in mine. We had eyes only for each other.

We reached a clump of cocoa-trees; one of them had fallen, and its smooth trunk offered a seat, protected from the sun by the shadowy leaves of its fellows. On this we sat down. There was no resistance—no reasoning process—no calculation of advantages and chances, such as is too often mingled with the noble passion of love. We felt nothing of this—nothing but that undefinable impulse which had entered our hearts, and to whose mystical power neither of us dreamed of offering opposition. Delay and duty were alike forgotten.

"I shall ask the question now—I shall know my fate at once," were *my* thoughts.

In the changing scenes of a soldier's life there is but little time for the slow formalities, the zealous vigils, the complicated *finesse* of courtship. Perhaps this consideration impelled me. I have but little confidence in the cold heart that is won by a series of assiduities. There is too much calculation of after-events—too much selfishness.

These reflections passed through my mind. I bent towards my companion, and whispered to her in that language—rich above all others in the vocabulary of the heart:

"*Guadalupe, tu me amas?*" (Guadalupe, do you love me?)

"*Yo te amo!*" was the simple reply. Need I describe the joyful feeling that filled my heart at that moment? My happiness was complete.

The confession rendered her sacred in my eyes, and we sat for some time silent, enjoying that transport only known to those who have truly, purely loved.

The trampling of hoofs! It was Clayley at the head of the troop. They were mounted, and waiting for me. Don Cosmé was impatient; so was the Doña Joaquina. I could not blame them, knowing the cause.

"Ride forward! I shall follow presently."

The horsemen filed off into the fields, headed by the lieutenant, beside whom rode Don Cosmé, on his white mule.

"You will soon return, Enrique?"

"I shall lose no opportunity of seeing you. I shall long for the hour more than you, I fear."

"Oh! no, no!"

"Believe me yes, Lupita! Say again you will never cease to love me."

"Never, never! *Tuya—tuya—hasta la muerte!*" (Yours—yours—till death!)

How often has this question been asked! How often answered as above!

I sprang into the saddle. A parting look—another from a distance—a wave of the hand—and the next moment I was urging my horse in full gallop under the shadowy palms.

A Bamboo Bridge in Southern Mexico.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DISAPPOINTMENT AND A NEW PLAN.

I OVERTOOK my companions as they were entering the woods. Clayley, who had been looking back from time to time, brushed alongside as if wishing to enter into conversation.

"Hard work, captain, to leave such quarters. By Jove! I could have stayed forever."

"Come, Clayley—you are in love."

"Yes; they who live in glass houses——Oh! if I could only speak the lingo as you do!"

I could not help smiling, for I had overheard him through the trees making the most he could of his partner's broken

English. I was curious to know how he had sped, and whether he had been as "quick upon the trigger" as myself. My curiosity was soon relieved.

"I tell you, captain," he continued, "if I could only have talked it, I would have put the question on the spot. I did try to get a "yes" or a "no" out of her; but she either couldn't or wouldn't understand me. It was all bad luck."

"Could you not make her understand you? Surely she knows English enough for that?"

"I thought so too; but when I spoke about love, she only laughed and slapped me on the face with her fan. Oh no; the thing must be done in Spanish, that's plain; and you see I am going to set about it in earnest. She loaned me these."

Saying this, he pulled out of the crown of his foraging-cap a couple of small volumes, which I recognized as a Spanish grammar and dictionary. I could not resist laughing aloud.

"Comrade, you will find the best dictionary to be the lady herself."

"That's true; but how the deuce are we to get back again? A mule-hunt don't happen every day."

"I fancy there will be some difficulty in it."

I had already thought of this. It was no easy matter to steal away from camp—one's brother-officers are so solicitous about your appearance at drills and parades. Don Cosmé's rancho was at least ten miles from the lines, and the road would not be the safest for the solitary lover. The prospect of frequent returns was not at all flattering.

"Can't we steal out at night?" suggested Clayley. "I think we might mount half a dozen of our fellows and do it snugly. What do you say, captain?"

"Clayley, I cannot return without this brother. I have almost given my word to that effect."

"You have? That is bad! I fear there is no prospect of getting him out as you propose."

My companion's prophetic foreboding proved but too correct; for on nearing the camp we were met by an aide-de-camp of the commander-in-chief, who informed me that on that very morning, all communication between the foreign ships of war and the besieged city had been prohibited.

Don Cosmé's journey, then, would be in vain. I explained this, advising him to return to his family.

"Do not make it known—say that some time is required, and you have left the matter in my hands. Be assured I shall be among the first to enter the city, and I shall find the boy, and bring him to his mother in safety."

This was the only consolation I could offer.

"You are kind, captain—very kind; but I know that nothing can now be done. We can only hope and pray."

The old man had dropped into a bent attitude, his countenance marked by the deepest melancholy.

Taking the Frenchman, Raoul, along with me, I rode back until I had placed him beyond the danger of the straggling plunderer, when we shook hands and parted. As he left me, I turned to look after him. He still sat in that attitude that betokens deep dejection, his shoulders bent forward over the neck of his mule, while he gazed vacantly on the path. My heart sank at the spectacle, and, sad and dispirited, I rode at a lagging pace towards the camp.

Not a shot had as yet been fired against the town, but our batteries were nearly perfected, and several mortars were mounted and ready to fling in their deadly missiles. I knew that every shot and shell would carry death into the devoted city, for there was not a point within its walls out of range of a ten-inch howitzer. Women and children must perish along with armed soldiers; and the boy—he, too,

might be a victim. Would this be the tidings I should carry to his home? And how should I be received by her with such a tale upon my lips? Already had I sent back a sorrowing father.

"Is there no way to save him, Raoul?"

"Captain?" inquired the man, starting at the vehemence of my manner.

A sudden thought had occurred to me.

"Are you well acquainted with Vera Cruz?"

"I know every street, captain."

"Where do those arches lead that open from the sea? There is one on each side of the mole."

I had observed these when visiting a friend, an officer of the navy, on board his ship.

"They are conductors, captain, to carry off the overflow of the sea after a norther. They lead under the city, opening at various places. I have had the pleasure of passing through them."

"Ha! How?"

"On a little smuggling expedition."

"It is possible, then, to reach the town by these?"

"Nothing easier, unless they may have a guard at the mouth; but that is not likely. They would not dream of any one's making the attempt."

"How would *you* like to make it?"

"If the captain wishes it, I will bring him a bottle of *eau-de-vie* from the Café de Santa Anna."

"I do not wish you to go alone. I would accompany you."

"Think of it, captain; there is risk for *you* in such an undertaking. *I* may go safely. No one knows that I have joined you, I believe. If *you* are taken——"

"Yes, yes; I know well the result."

"The risk is not great, either," continued the French-

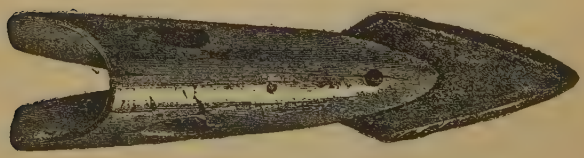
man, in a half-soliloquy. "Disguised as Mexicans, we might do it; you speak the language as well as I. If you wish it, captain——"

"I do."

"I am ready, then."

I knew the fellow well: one of those dare-devil spirits ready for anything that promised adventure—a child of fortune—a stray waif tumbling about upon the waves of chance—gifted with head and heart of no common order—ignorant of books, yet educated in experience. There was a dash of the heroic in his character that had won my admiration, and I was fond of his company.

It was a desperate adventure—I knew that; but I felt stronger interest than common in the fate of this boy. My own future fate, too, was in a great degree connected with his safety. There was something in the very danger that lured me on to tempt it. I felt that it would be adding another chapter to a life which I have termed "adventurous."



A Serenade in Vera Cruz.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FOOLHARDY ADVENTURE.

AT night Raoul and I, disguised in the leathern dresses of two rancheros, stole round the lines, and reached Punta Hornos, a point beyond our own pickets. Here we "took the water," wading waist-deep.

This was about ten o'clock. The tide was just setting out, and the night, by good fortune, was as dark as pitch.

As the swell rolled in we were buried to the neck, and when it rolled back again we bent forward; so that at no time could much of our bodies be seen above the surface.

In this manner, half wading, half swimming, we kept up to the town.

It was a toilsome journey, but the water was warm, and the sand on the bottom firm and level. We were strengthened —I at least—by hope and the knowledge of danger. Doubtless my companion felt the latter stimulant as much as I.

We soon reached the battlements of Santiago, where we proceeded with increased caution. We could see the sentry up against the sky, pacing along the parapet. His shrill cry startled us. We thought we had been discovered. The darkness alone prevented this.

At length we passed him, and came opposite the city, whose battlements rested upon the water's edge.

The tide was at ebb, and a bed of black, weed-covered rocks lay between the sea and the bastion.

We approached these with caution, and crawling over the slippery boulders, after a hundred yards or so found ourselves in the entrance of one of the conductors.

Here we halted to rest ourselves, sitting down upon a ledge of rock. We were in no more danger there than in our own tents, yet within twenty feet were men who, had they known our proximity, would have strung us up like a pair of dogs.

But our danger was far from lying at this end of the adventure.

After a rest of half an hour we kept up into the conductor. My companion seemed perfectly at home in this subterranean passage, walking along as boldly as if it had been brilliantly lighted with gas.

After proceeding some distance we approached a grating, where a light shot in from above.

"Can we pass out here?" I inquired.

"Not yet, captain," answered Raoul in a whisper. "Farther on."

We passed the grating, then another and another, and at length reached one where only a feeble ray struggled downward through the bars.

Here my guide stopped, and listened attentively for several minutes. Then, stretching out his hand, he undid the fastening of the grate, and silently turned it upon its hinge. He next swung himself up until his head projected above ground. In this position he again listened, looking cautiously on all sides.

Satisfied at length that there was no one near, he drew his body up through the grating and disappeared. After a short interval he returned, and called down :

"Come, captain."

I swung myself up to the street. Raoul shut down the trap with care.

"Take marks, captain," whispered he; "we may get separated."

It was a dismal suburb. No living thing was apparent, with the exception of a gang of prowling dogs, lean and savage, as all dogs are during a siege. An image, decked in all the glare of gaud and tinsel, looked out of a glazed niche in the opposite wall. A dim lamp burned at its feet, showing to the charitable a receptacle for their offerings. A quaint old steeple loomed in the darkness overhead.

"What church?" I asked Raoul.

"La Magdalena."

"That will do. Now onward."

"*Buenas noches, senor!*" said Raoul to a soldier who passed us, wrapped in his great-coat.

"*Buenas noches!*" returned the man in a gruff voice.

We stole cautiously along the streets, keeping in the darker ones to avoid observation. The citizens were mostly in their beds; but groups of soldiers were straggling about, and patrols met us at every corner.

It became necessary to pass through one of the streets that was brilliantly lighted. When about half-way up it a fellow came swinging along, and, noticing our strange appearance, stopped and looked after us.

Our dresses, as I have said, were of leather; our calzoneros, as well as jackets, were shining with the sea-water, and dripping upon the pavement at every step.

Before we could walk beyond reach, the man shouted out:

"*Carajo! caballeros*, why don't you strip before entering the *baño?*"

"What is it?" cried a soldier, coming up and stopping us.

A group of his comrades joined him, and we were hurried into the light.

"*Mil diablos!*" exclaimed one of the soldiers, recognizing Raoul; "our old friend the Frenchman! *Parlez-vous Français, monsieur?*"

"Spies!" cried another.

"Arrest them!" shouted a sergeant of the guard, at the moment coming up with a patrol, and we were both jumped upon and held by about a dozen men.

In vain Raoul protested our innocence, declaring that we were only two poor fishermen, who had wet our clothes in drawing the nets.

"It's not a fisherman's costume, monsieur," said one.

"Fishermen don't usually wear diamonds on their knuckles," cried another, snatching a ring from my finger.

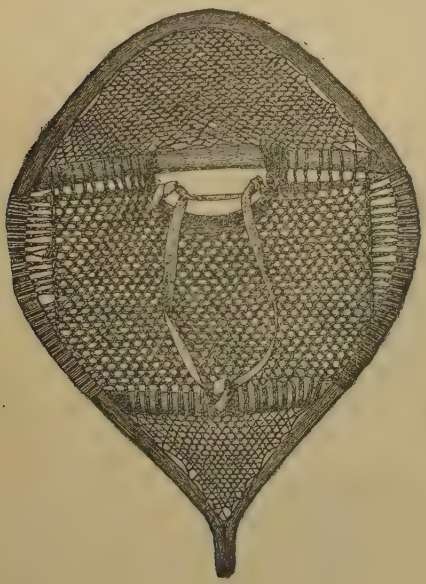
On this ring, inside the circlet, were engraven my name and rank!

Several men, now coming forward, recognized Raoul, and stated, moreover, that he had been missing for some days.

"He must, therefore," said they, "have been with the Yankees."

We were soon handcuffed and marched off to the guard-prison. There we were closely searched, but nothing further was found, except my purse, containing several gold eagles —an American coin that of itself would have been sufficient evidence to condemn me.

We were now heavily chained to each other, after which the guard left us to our thoughts. They could not have left us in much less agreeable companionship.



Mexican Cock-fight : Often Ending in a Fist Fight.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HELP FROM HEAVEN.

"I WOULD not care a *claco* for my own life," said Raoul, as the gate closed upon us, "but that you, captain—*hélas ! hélas !*" and the Frenchman groaned and sank upon the stone bench, dragging me down also.

I could offer no consolation. I knew that we should be tried as spies; and, if convicted—a result almost certain—we had not twenty hours to live. The thought that I had brought this brave fellow to such a fate enhanced the misery of my situation. To die thus ingloriously was bitter indeed. Three days ago I could have spent my life recklessly; but now, how changed were my feelings! I had found some-

thing worth living to enjoy; and to think I should never again—"Oh I have become a coward!" I cursed my rashness bitterly.

We passed the night in vain attempts at mutual consolation. Even our present sufferings occupied us. Our clothes were wet through, and the night had become piercingly cold. Our bed was a bench of stone; and upon this we lay as our chains would allow us, sleeping close together to generate warmth. It was to us a miserable night; but morning came at last, and at an early hour we were examined by the officer of the guard.

Our court-martial was fixed for the afternoon, and before this tribunal we were carried, amidst the jeers of the populace. We told our story, giving the name of the boy Narcisso, and the house where he was lodged. This was verified by the court, but declared to be a *ruse* invented by my comrade—whose knowledge of the place and other circumstances rendered the thing probable enough. Raoul, moreover, was identified by many of the citizens, who proved his disappearance coincident with the landing of the American expedition. Besides, my ring and purse were sufficient of themselves to condemn us—and condemned we were. We were to be *garotted* on the following morning!

Raoul was offered life if he wound turn traitor and give information of the enemy. The brave soldier indignantly spurned the offer. It was extended to me, with a similar result.

All at once I observed a strange commotion among the people. Citizens and soldiers rushed from the hall, and the court, hastily pronouncing our sentence, ordered us to be carried away. We were seized by the guard, pulled into the street, and dragged back towards our late prison. Our conductors were evidently in a great hurry. As we passed along we were met by citizens running to and fro, apparently

in great terror—women and children uttering shrieks and suddenly disappearing behind walls and battlements. Some fell upon their knees, beating their breasts and praying loudly. Others, clasping their infants, stood shivering and speechless.

"It is just like the way they go in an earthquake," remarked Raoul, "but there is none. What can it be, captain?"

Before I could reply, the answer came from another quarter.

Far above, an object was hissing and hurtling through the air.

"A shell from ours! Hurrah!" cried Raoul.

I could scarcely refrain from cheering, though we ourselves might be the victims of the missile.

The soldiers who were guarding us had flung themselves down behind walls and pillars, leaving us alone in the open street!

The bomb fell beyond us, and, striking the pavement, burst. The fragments went crashing through the side of an adjoining house; and the wail that came back told how well the iron messengers had done their work. This was the second shell that had been projected from the American mortars. The first had been equally destructive; and hence the extreme terror of both citizen and soldier. Every missile seemed charged with death.

Our guard now returned and dragged us onward, treating us with increased brutality. They were enraged at the exultation visible in our manner; and one, more ferocious than the rest, drove his bayonet into the fleshy part of my comrade's thigh. After several like acts of inhumanity, we were thrown into our prison and locked up as before.

Since our capture we had tasted neither food nor drink, and hunger and thirst added to the misery of our situation.

The insult had maddened Raoul, and the pain of his wound now rendered him furious. He had not hands to touch it or dress it. Frenzied by anger and pain to a strength almost superhuman, he twisted off his iron manacles as if they had been straws. This done, the chain that bound us together was soon broken, and our ankle "jewelry" followed.

"Let us live our last hours, captain, as we have our lives, free and unfettered!"

I could not help admiring the spirit of my brave comrade.

We placed ourselves close to the door and listened.

We could hear the heavy cannonade all around, and now and then the distant shots from the American batteries. We would wait for the bursting of the bombs, and, as the hoarse thunder of crumbling walls reached our ears, Raoul would spring up, shouting his wild, half French, half-Indian cries.

A thought occurred to me.

"We have arms, Raoul." I held up the fragments of the heavy chain that had yoked us. "Could you reach the trap on a run, without the danger of mistaking your way?"

Raoul started.

"You are right, captain—I can. It is barely possible they may visit us to-night. If so, any chance for life is better than none at all."

By a tacit understanding each of us took a fragment of the chain—there were but two—and sat down by the door to be ready in case our guards should open it. We sat for over an hour, without exchanging a word. We could hear the shells as they burst upon the housetops, the crashing of torn timbers and the rumbling of walls rolling over, struck by the heavy shot. We could hear the shouts of men and the wailing of women, with now and then a shriek louder than all

others, as some missile carried death into the terror-struck crowd.

"*Parbleu!*" said Raoul; "if they had only allowed us a couple of days, our friends would have opened these doors for us. *Carrambo!*"

This last exclamation was uttered in a shriek. Simultaneously a heavy object burst through the roof, tearing the bricks and plaster, and falling with the ring of iron on the floor.

Then followed a deafening crash. The whole earth seemed to shake, and the whizzing of a thousand particles filled the air. A cloud of dust and lime, mixed with the smoke of sulphur, was around us. I gasped for breath, nearly suffocated. I endeavored to cry out, but my voice, husky and coarse, was scarcely audible to myself. I succeeded at length in ejaculating:

"Raoul! Raoul!"

I heard the voice of my comrade seemingly at a great distance. I threw out my arms and groped for him. He was close by me, but, like myself, choking for want of air.

"*By Jove!* it was a shell," said he in a wheezing voice. "Are you hurt, captain?"

"No," I replied; "and you?"

"Sound as a bell—our luck is good—it must have struck every other part of the cell."

"Better it had not missed us," said I, after a pause; "we are only spared for the *garotte*."

"I am not so sure of that, captain," replied my companion, in a manner that seemed to imply he had still hopes of an escape.

"Where that shell came in," he continued, "something else may go out. Let us see—was it the roof?"

"I think so."

We groped our way hand in hand towards the center of the room, looking upwards.

"*Carrambo!*" ejaculated Raoul; "I can't see a foot before me—my eyes are filled—*bah!*"

So were mine. We stood waiting. The dust was gradually settling down, and we could perceive a faint glimmer from above. *There was a large hole trhough the roof.*

Slowly its outlines became defined, and we could see that it was large enough to pass the body of a man; but it was at least fourteen feet from the floor, and we had not timber enough to make a walking-stick!

"What is to be done? We are not cats, Raoul. We can never reach it!"

My comrade, without making a reply, lifted me up in his arms, telling me to climb. I mounted upon his shoulders, balancing myself like a Bedouin; but with my utmost stretch I could not touch the roof.

"Hold!" cried I, a thought striking me. "Let me down, Raoul. Now, if they will only give us a little time."

"Never fear for them; they've enough to do taking care of their own yellow carcasses."

I had noticed that a beam of the roof formed one side of the break, and I proceeded to twist our handcuffs into a clamp, while Raoul peeled off his leather breeches and commenced tearing them into strips. In ten minutes our "tackle" was ready, and, mounting upon my comrade's shoulders, I flung it carefully at the beam. It failed to catch, and I came down to the floor, my balance being lost in the effort. I repeated the attempt. Again it failed, and I staggered down as before.

"*Parbleu!* cried Raoul through his teeth. The iron had struck him on the head."

"Come, we shall try and try—our lives depend upon it."

The third attempt, according to popular superstition, should be successful. It *was* so with us. The clamp caught, and the string hung dangling downwards. Mounting again upon

my comrade's shoulders, I grasped the thong high up to test its hold. It was secure; and, cautioning Raoul to hold fast lest the hook might be detached by my vibration, I climbed up and seized hold of the beam. By this I was enabled to squeeze myself through the roof.

Once outside I crawled cautiously along the azotea, which like all others in Spanish houses, was flat, and bordered by a low parapet of mason-work. I peeped over this parapet, looking down into the street. It was night, and I could see no one below; but up against the sky upon distant battlements I could distinguish armed soldiers busy around their guns. These blazed forth at intervals, throwing their sulphureous glare over the city.

I returned to assist Raoul, but, impatient of my delay, he had already mounted, and was dragging up the thong after him.

We crawled from roof to roof, looking for a dark spot to descend into the street. None of the houses in the range of our prison were more than one story high, and, after passing several, we let ourselves down into a narrow alley. It was still early, and the people were running to and fro, amidst the frightful scenes of the bombardment. The shrieks of women were in our ears, mingled with the shouts of men, the groans of the wounded, and the fierce yelling of an excited rabble. The constant whizzing of bombs filled the air, and parapets were hurled down. A round-shot struck the cupola of a church as we passed nearly under it, and the ornaments of ages came tumbling down, blocking up the thoroughfare. We clambered over the ruins and went on. There was no need of our crouching into dark shadows. No one thought of observing us now.

"We are near the house—will you still make the attempt to take him along?" inquired Raoul, referring to the boy Narcisso.

"By all means! Show me the place," replied I, half ashamed at having almost forgotten, in the midst of our own perils, the object of our enterprise.

Raoul pointed to a large house with portals and a great door in the center.

"There, captain—there it is."

"Go under that shadow and wait. I shall be better alone."

This was said in a whisper. My companion did as directed.

"I approached the great door and knocked boldly.

"*Quien?* cried the porter within the *saguan.*

"*Yo,*" I responded.

The door was opened slowly and with caution.

"Is the Señorito Narcisso within," I inquired.

The man answered in the affirmative.

"Tell him a friend wishes to speak with him."

After a moment's hesitation the porter dragged himself lazily up the stone steps. In a few seconds the boy—a fine bold-looking lad, whom I had seen during our trial—came leaping down. He started on recognizing me.

"Hush!" I whispered, making signs to him to be silent. "Take leave of your friends, and meet me in ten minutes behind the church of La Magdalena."

"Why, señor," inquired the boy without listening, "how have you got out of prison? I have just been to the governor on your behalf, and——"

"No matter how," I replied, interrupting him; "follow my directions—remember your mother and sisters are suffering."

"I shall come," said the boy resolutely.

"*Hasta luego!*" (Lose no time then). "*Adios!*"

We parted without another word. I rejoined Raoul, and we walked on towards La Magdalena. We passed through the street where we had been captured on the preceding night,

but it was so altered that we should not have known it. Fragments of walls were thrown across the patch, and here and there lay masses of bricks and mortar freshly torn down.

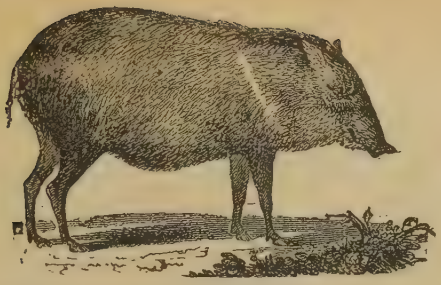
Neither patrol nor sentry thought of troubling us now, and our strange appearance did not strike the attention of the passengers.

We reached the church, and Raoul descended, leaving me to wait for the boy. The latter was true to his word, and his slight figure soon appeared rounding the corner. Without losing a moment we all three entered the subterranean passage, but the tide was still high, and we had to wait for the ebb. This came at length, and, clambering over the rocks, we entered the surf and waded as before. After an hour's toil we reached Punta Hornos, and a little beyond this point I was enabled to hail one of our own pickets, and to pass the lines in safety.

At ten o'clock I was in my own tent—just twenty-four hours from the time I had left it, and, with the exception of Clayley, not one of my brother-officers knew anything of our adventure.

Clayley and I agreed to "mount" a party the next night and carry the boy to his friends. This we accordingly did, stealing out of camp after tattoo. It would be impossible to describe the rejoicing of our new acquaintances—the gratitude lavishly expressed—the smiles of love that thanked us.

We should have repeated our visits almost nightly; but from that time the guerilleros swarmed in the back-country, and small parties of our men, straggling from camp, were cut off daily. It was necessary, therefore, for my friend and myself to chafe under a prudent impatience, and wait for the fall of Vera Cruz.



Mexican Peccary the Terror of the Hunters.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A SHOT IN THE DARK.

THE "City of the True Cross" fell upon the 29th of March, 1847, and the American flag waved over the castle of San Juan de Ulloa. The enemy's troops marched out upon parole, most of them taking their way to their distant homes upon the tablelands of the Andes.

The American garrison entered the town, but the body of our army encamped upon the green plains to the south.

Here we remained for several days, awaiting the order to march into the interior.

A report had reached us that the Mexican forces, under the celebrated Santa Anna, were concentrating at Puente Nacional; but shortly after it was ascertained that the

enemy would make his next stand in the pass of the Cerro Gordo, about half-way between Vera Cruz and the mountains.

After the surrender of the city we were relieved from severe duty, and Clayley and I, taking advantage of this, resolved upon paying another stolen visit to our friends.

Several parties of light horse had been sent out to scour the country, and it had been reported that the principal guerilla of the enemy had gone farther up towards the Puente Nacional. We did not, therefore, anticipate any danger from that source.

We started after nightfall, taking with us three of our best men—Lincoln, Chane, and Raoul. The boy Jack was also of the party. We were mounted on such horses as could be had. The major had kept his word with me, and I bestrode the black—a splendid thoroughbred Arab.

It was a clear moonlight, and as we rode along we could not help noticing many changes.

War had left its black mark upon the objects around. The ranchos by the road were tenantless—many of them wrecked, not a few of them entirely gone; where they had stood, a ray of black ashes marking the outline of their slight walls. Some were represented by a heap of half-burned rubbish still smoking and smoldering.

Various pieces of household furniture lay along the path torn or broken—articles of little value, strewed by the wanton hand of the ruthless robber. Here a petaté, or a palm hat—there a broken olla; a stringless bandolon, the fragments of a guitar crushed under the angry heel, or some flimsy articles of female dress cuffed into the dust; leaves of torn books—*misas*, or lives of the *Santisima Maria*—the labors of some zealous padre; old paintings of the saints, Guadalupe, Remedios, and Dolores—of the Niño of Guatepec

rudely torn from the walls and perforated by the sacrilegious bayonet, flung into the road, kicked from foot to foot the dishonored *penates* of a conquered people.

A painful presentiment began to harass me. Wild stories had lately circulated through the army stories of the misconduct of straggling parties of our soldiers in the back-country. These had stolen from camp, or gone out under the pretext of "beef-hunting."

Hitherto I had felt no apprehension, not believing that any small party would carry their foraging to so distant a point as the house of our friends. I knew that any detachment, commanded by an officer, would act in a proper manner; and, indeed, any respectable body of American soldiers, without an officer. But in all armies, in war-time, there are robbers, who have thrown themselves into the ranks for no other purpose than to take advantage of the license of a stolen foray.

We were within less than a league of Don Cosmé's rancho, and still the evidence of ruin and plunder continued—the evidence, too, of a retaliatory vengeance; for on entering a glade, the mutilated body of a soldier lay across the path. He was upon his back, with open eyes glaring upon the moon. His tongue and heart were cut out, and his left arm had been struck off at the elbow-joint. Not ten steps beyond this we passed another one, similarly disfigured. We were now on the neutral ground.

As we entered the forest my forebodings became painfully oppressive. I imparted them to Clayley. My friend had been occupied with similar thoughts.

"It is just possible," said he, "that nobody has found the way. By heavens!" he added, with an earnestness unusual in his manner, "I have been far more uneasy about the other side—those half-brigands and that hellish villain Dubrosc."

"On! on!" I ejaculated, digging the spurs into the flanks of my horse, who sprang forward at a gallop.

I could say no more. Clayley had given utterance to my very thoughts, and a painful feeling shot through my heart.

My companions dashed after me, and we pressed through the trees at a reckless pace.

We entered an opening. Raoul, who was then riding in the advance, suddenly checked his horse, waving on us to halt. We did so.

"What is it, Raoul?" I asked in a whisper.

"Something entered the thicket, captain."

"At what point?"

"There, to the left;" and the Frenchman pointed in this direction. "I did not see it well; it might have been a stray animal."

"I seed it, cap'n," said Lincoln, closing up; "it wur a mustang."

"Mounted, think you?"

"I ain't confident; I only seed its hips. We were a-gwine too fast to get a good sight on the critter; but it wur a mustang—I seed that cl'ar as daylight."

I sat for a moment, hesitating.

"I kin tell yer whether it wur mounted, cap'n," continued the hunter, "if yer'll let me slide down and take a squint at the critter's tracks."

"It is out of our way. Perhaps you had better," I added, after a little reflection. "Raoul, you and Chane dismount and go with the sergeant. Hold their horses, Jack."

"If yer'll not object, cap'n," said Lincoln, addressing me in a whisper, "I'd rayther go ithout kump'ny. Thar ain't two men I'd like, in a tight fix, better'n Rowl and Chane; but I hev done a smart chance o' trackin' in my time, an' I allers gets along better when I'm by myself."

"Very well, sergeant; as you wish it, go alone. We shall wait for you."

The hunter dismounted, and, having carefully examined his rifle, strode off in a direction nearly opposite to that where the object had been seen.

I was about to call after him, impatient to continue our journey; but, reflecting a moment, I concluded it was better to leave him to his "instincts." In five minutes he had disappeared, having entered the chapparal.

We sat in our saddles for half an hour, not without feelings of impatience. I was beginning to fear that some accident had happened to our comrade, when we heard the faint crack of a rifle, but in a direction *nearly opposite to that which Lincoln had taken.*

"It's the sergeant's rifle, captain," said Chane.

"Forward!" I shouted; and we dashed into the thicket in the direction whence the report came.

We had ridden about a hundred yards through the chapparal, when we met Lincoln coming up, with his rifle shouldered.

"Well?" I asked.

"'Twur mounted, cap'n—tain't now."

"What do you mean, sergeant?"

"That the mustang hed a yeller-belly on his back, and that he hain't got ne'er a one now, as I knows on. He got cl'ar away from me—that is, the mustang. The yeller-belly didn't."

"What! you haven't——?"

"But I hev, cap'n. I had good, soun' reason."

"What reason?" I demanded.

"In the first place, the feller wur a gurillye; and in the next, he wur an outpost picket."

"How know you this?"

"Wal, cap'n, I struck his trail on the edge of the thicket.

I knowed he hedn't kum fur, as I looked out for sign whar we crossed the crik bottom, an' seed none. I tuk the back track, an' soon come up with his joblots under a big button-wood. He had been thar some time, for the ground wur stamped like a bullock-pen."

"Well?" said I, impatient to hear the result.

"I follered him up till I seed him leanin' for'ard on his horse, clost to the track we oughter take. From this I suspicioned him; but, gettin' a leetle closter, I seed his gun an' fixin's strapped to the saddle. So I tuk a sight, and whumelled him. The darned mustang got away with his traps. This hyur's the only thing worth takin' from his carcage: it wudn't do much harm to a grizzly b'ar."

"Good heaven!" I exclaimed, grasping the glittering object which the hunter held toward me; "what have you done?"

It was a silver-handled stiletto. I recognized the weapon. I had given it to the boy Narcisso.

"No harm, I reckin, cap'n?"

"The man—the Mexican? How did he look?—what like?" I demanded anxiously.

"Like?" repeated the hunter. "Why, cap'n, I 'ud call him as ugly a skunk as yer kin skeer up any whar—'ceptin' it mout be among the Digger Injuns, but yer kin see for yurself—he's clost by."

I leaped from my horse, and followed Lincoln through the bushes. Twenty paces brought us to the object of our search, upon the border of a small glade. The body lay upon its back, where it had been flung by the rearing mustang. The moon was shining full upon the face. I stooped down to examine it. A single glance was sufficient. I had never seen the features before. They were coarse and swart, and the long black locks were matted and woolly. He was a zambo; and, from the half-military equipments

that clung around his body, I saw that he had been a guerillero. Lincoln was right.

"Wal, cap'n," said he, after I had concluded my examination of the corpse, "ain't he a picter?"

"You think he was waiting for us?"

"For us or some other game—that's sartin."

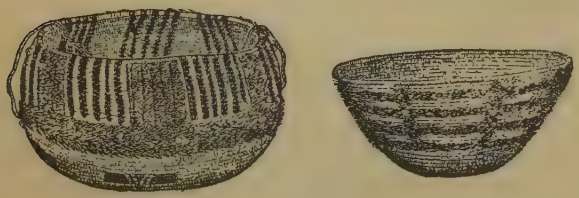
"There's a road branches off here to Medellin," said Raoul, coming up.

"It could not have been for us: they had no knowledge of our intention to come out."

"Possibly enough, captain," remarked Clayley in a whisper to me. "That villain would naturally expect us to return here. He will have learned all that has passed: Narcisso's escape—our visits. You know he would watch night and day to trap either of us."

"Oh, heavens!" I exclaimed, as the memory of this man came over me; "why did I not bring more men? Clayley, we must go on now. Slowly, Raoul—slowly, and with caution—do you hear?"

The Frenchman struck into the path that led to the rancho, and rode silently forward. We followed in single file, Lincoln keeping a look-out some paces in the rear.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

CAPTURED BY GUERILLEROS.

E emerged from the forest and entered the fields. All silent. No sign or sound of a suspicion. The house still standing and safe.

"The guerillero must have been waiting for some one whom he expected by the Medellin Road. Ride on, Raoul!'

"Captain," said the man in a whisper, and halting at the end of the guardaraya.

"Well?"

"Some one passed out at the other end."

"Some of the domestics, no doubt. You may ride on, and——never mind; I will take the advance myself."

I brushed past, and kept up the guardaraya. In a few minutes we had reached the lower end of the pond, where we halted. Here we dismounted; and, leaving the men,

Clayley and I stole cautiously forward. We could see no one, though everything about the house looked as usual.

"Are they abed, think you?" asked Clayley.

"No, it is too early—perhaps below, at supper."

"Heaven send! we shall be most happy to join them. I am as hungry as a wolf."

We approached the house. Still all silent.

"Where are the dogs?"

We entered.

"Strange!—no one stirring. Ha! the furniture gone!"

We passed into the porch in the rear, and approached the stairway.

"Let us go below—can you see any light?"

I stooped and looked down. I could neither hear nor see any signs of life. I turned, and was gazing up at my friend in wonderment, when my eye was attracted by a strange movement upon the low branches of the olive-trees. The next moment a dozen forms dropped to the ground; and, before we could draw sword or pistol, myself and comrade were bound hand and foot and flung upon our backs.

At the same instant we heard a scuffle down by the pond. Two or three shots were fired; and a few minutes after a crowd of men came up, bringing with them Chane, Lincoln, and Raoul, as prisoners.

We were all dragged out into the open ground in front of the rancho, where our horses were also brought and picketed.

Here we lay upon our backs, a dozen guerilleros remaining to guard us. The others went back among the olives, where we could hear them laughing, talking, and yelling. We could see nothing of their movements, as we were tightly bound, and as helpless as if under the influence of nightmare.

As we lay, Lincoln was a little in front of me. I could perceive that they had doubly bound him in consequence of the fierce resistance he had made. He had killed one of

the guerilleros. He was banded and strapped all over, like a mummy, and he lay gnashing his teeth and foaming with fury. Raoul and the Irishman appeared to take things more easily, or rather more recklessly.

"I wonder if they are going to hang us to-night, or keep us till morning? What do you think, Chane?" asked the Frenchman, laughing as he spoke.

"Be the crass! they'll lose no time—ye may depind on that same. There's not an ounce av tinder mercy in their black hearts; yez may swear till that, from the way this eel-skin cuts."

"I wonder, Murt," said Raoul, speaking from sheer recklessness, "if St. Patrick couldn't help us a bit. You have him round your neck, haven't you?"

"Be the powers, Rowl! though ye be only jokin', I've a good mind to thry his holiness upon thim. I've got both him and the mother undher me jacket, av I could only rache thim."

"Good!" cried the other. "Do!"

"It's aisy for ye to say 'Do,' when I can't budge as much as my little finger."

"Never mind. I'll arrange that," answered Raoul. "*Hola, señor!*" shouted he to one of the guerilleros.

"*Quien?*" (Who?), said the man, approaching.

"*Usted su mismo*" (Yourself), replied Raoul.

"*Que cosa?*" (What is it?)

"This gentleman," said Raoul, still speaking in Spanish, and nodding towards Chane, "has a pocket full of money."

A hint upon that head was sufficient; and the guerilleros, who, strangely enough, seemed to have overlooked this part of their duty, immediately commenced rifling our pockets, ripping them open with their long knives. They were not a great deal the richer for their pains, our joint purse yielding about twenty dollars. Upon Chane there was no money

found; and the man whom Raoul had deceived repaid the latter by a curse and a couple of kicks.

The saint, however, turned up, attached to the Irishman's neck by a leathern string; and along with him a small crucifix, and a pewter image of the Virgin Mary.

This appeared to please the guerilleros; and one of them, bending over the Irishman, slackened his fastenings a little —still, however, leaving him bound.

"Thank yer honner," said Chane; "that's dacent of ye. That's what Misther O'Connell wud call *amaylioration*. I'm a hape aysier now.

"*Mucho bueno*," said the man, nodding and laughing.

"Och, be my sowl, yes!—*mucho bueno*. But I'd have no objecshun if yer honner wud make it *mucho bettero*. Couldn't ye just take a little turn aff me wrist here?—it cuts like a rayzyer."

I could not restrain myself from laughing, in which Clayley and Raoul joined me; and we formed a chorus that seemed to astonish our captors. Lincoln alone preserved his sullenness. He had not spoken a word.

Little Jack had been placed upon the ground near the hunter. He was but loosely tied, our captors not thinking it worth while to trouble themselves about so diminutive a subject. I had noticed him wriggling about, and using all his Indian craft to undo his fastenings; but he appeared not to have succeeded, as he now lay perfectly still again.

While the guerilleros were occupied with Chane and his saints, I observed the boy roll himself over and over, until he lay close up against the hunter. One of the guerilleros, noticing this, picked Jack up by the waistbelt, and, holding him at arm's length, shouted out—

"*Mira camarados! que briboncito!*" (Look, comrades! what a little rascal!)

Amidst the laughing of the guerilleros, Jack was swung

out, and fell in a bed of shrubs and flowers, where we saw no more of him. As he was bound, we concluded that he could not help himself, and was lying where he had been thrown.

My attention was called away from this incident by an exclamation from Chane.

"Och! blood, turf, and murther? If there isn't that Frinch scoundhrel Dubrosc!"

I looked up. The man was standing over us.

"Ah, Monsieur le Capitaine!" cried he, in a sneering voice, "*comment vous portez-vous*? You came up dove-hunting—eh? The birds, you see, are not in the cot."

Had there been only a thread around my body, I could not have moved at that moment. I felt cold and rigid as marble. A thousand agonizing thoughts crowded upon me at once—my doubts, my fears on *her* account, drowning all ideas of personal danger. I could have died at that moment, and without a groan, to have ensured her safety.

There was something so fiendish, so utterly hellish, in the character of this man—a polished brutality, too—that caused me to fear the worst.

"Oh, Heaven!" I muttered, "in the power of such a man!"

"Ho!" cried Dubrosc, advancing a pace or two, and seizing my horse by the bridle, "a splendid mount! An Arab, as I live! Look here, Yañez!" he continued, addressing a guerillero who accompanied him, "I claim this, if you have no objection."

"Take him," said the other, who was evidently the leader of the party.

"Thank you. And you, Monsieur le Capitaine," he added ironically, turning to me: "thank you for this handsome present. He will just replace my brave mustang, for whose loss I expect I am indebted to you, you great cussed brute!—

The last words were addressed to Lincoln; and, as though maddened by the memory of La Virgen, he approached the latter, and kicked him fiercely in the side.

The wanton foot had scarcely touched his ribs, when the hunter sprang up, as if by galvanic action, *the thongs flying from his body* in fifty spiral fragments. With a bound he leaped to his rifle; and, clutching it—he knew it was empty—struck the astonished Frenchman a blow upon the head. The latter fell heavily to the earth. In an instant a dozen knives and swords were aimed at the hunter's throat. Sweeping his rifle around him, he cleared an opening, and, dashing past his foes with a wild yell, bounded off through the shrubbery. The guerilleros followed, screaming with rage; and we could hear an occasional shot, as they continued the pursuit into the distant woods. Dubrosc was carried back into the rancho, apparently lifeless.

We were still wondering how our comrade had untied himself when one of the guerilleros, lifting a piece of the thong, exclaimed:

"*Carajo! ha cartado el briboncito!*" (The little rascal has cut it!); and the man darted into the shrubbery, in search of little Jack. It was with us a moment of fearful suspense. We expected to see poor Jack sacrificed instantly. We watched the man with intense emotion, as he ran to and fro.

At length he threw up his arms with a gesture of surprise, calling out at the same time:

"*Por todos santos! se fue!*" (By all the saints! he's gone!)

"Hurrah!" cried Chane; "holies—such a gossoon as that boy!"

Several of the guerilleros dived into the thicket; but their search was in vain.

We were now separated, so that we could no longer con-

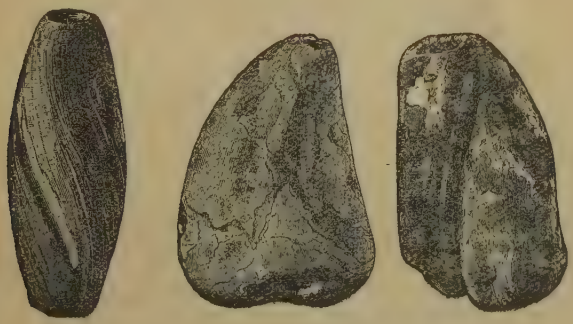
verse, and were more strictly watched, two sentries standing over each of us. We spent about an hour in this way.

A Typical Scene in Spanish America. A Mexican Ranche.

Straggling parties at intervals came back from the pursuit; and we could gather, from what we overhead, that neither Lincoln nor Jack had yet been retaken.

We could hear talking in the rear of the rancho, and we felt that our fate was being determined upon. It was plain Dubrosc was not in command of the party. Had he been so, we should never have been carried beyond the olive-grove. It appeared we were to be hung elsewhere.

At length a movement was visible that betokened departure. Our horses were taken away, and saddled mules were led out in front of the rancho. Upon these we were set, and strapped tightly to the saddles. A serapé was passed over each of us, and we were blinded by tapojos. A bugle then sounded the "forward." We could hear a confusion of noises, the prancing of many hoofs, and the next moment we felt ourselves moving along at a hurried pace through the woods.



Indian Dancing Girls in Mexico.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A BLIND RIDE.

WE rode all night. The mule-blinds, although preventing us from seeing a single object, proved to be an advantage. They saved our eyes and faces from the thorny claws of the acacia and mezquite. Without hands to fend them off, these would have torn us badly, as we could feel them, from time to time, penetrating even the hard leather of the tapojos. Our thongs chafed us, and we suffered great pain from the monotonous motion. Our road lay through thick woods. This we could perceive from the constant rustle of the leaves and the crackling of branches, as the cavalcade passed on.

Towards morning our route led over hills, steep and difficult, we could tell from the attitudes of our animals. We had passed the level plains, and were entering among the "foot-hills" of the Mexican mountains. There was no passing or repassing of one another. From this I concluded that we were journeying along a narrow road, and in single file.

Raoul was directly in front of me, and we could converse at times.

"Where do you think they are taking us, Raoul?" I inquired, speaking in French.

"To Cenobio's hacienda. I hope so, at least."

"Why do you hope so?"

"Because we shall stand some chance for our lives. Cenobio is a noble fellow."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, captain; I have helped him a little in the contraband trade."

"A smuggler, is he?"

"Why, in this country, it is hardly fair to call it by so harsh a name, as the Government itself dips out of the same dish. Smuggling here, as in most other countries, should be looked upon rather as the offspring of necessity and mal-administration than as a vice in itself. Cenobio is a *contrabandisto*, and upon a large scale."

"And you are a political philosopher, Raoul!"

"Bah! captain, it would be bad if I could not defend my own calling," replied my comrade with a laugh.

"You think, then, that we are in the hands of Cenobio's men."

"I am sure of it, captain. Jehosaphat! had it been Jarauta's band we would have been in heaven—that is, our souls—and our bodies would now be embellishing some of the trees upon Don Cosmé's plantation. Heaven protect us from Jarauta! The robber-priest gives but short shrift to any of his

enemies; but if he could lay his hands on your humble servant, you would see hanging done in double-quick time."

"Why think you we are with Cenobio's guerilla?"

"I know Yañez, whom we saw at the rancho. He is one of Cenobio's officers, and the leader of this party, which is only a detachment. I am rather surprised that *he* has brought us away, considering that Dubrosc is with him: there must have been some influence in our favor which I cannot understand."

I was struck by the remark, and began to reflect upon it in silence. The voice of the Frenchman again fell upon my ear.

"I cannot be mistaken. No—this hill—it runs down to the San Juan River."

Again, after a short interval, as we felt ourselves fording a stream, Raoul said:

"Yes, the San Juan—I know the stony bottom—just the depth, too, at this season."

Our mules plunged through the swift current, flinging the spray over our heads. We could feel the water up to the saddle-flaps, cold as ice; and yet we were journeying in the hot tropic. But we were fording a stream fed by the snows of Orizava.

"Now I am certain of the road," continued Raoul, after we had crossed. "I know this bank well. The mule slides. Look out, captain."

"For what?" I asked, with some anxiety.

The Frenchman laughed as he replied:

"I believe I am taking leave of my senses. I called to you to look out, as if you had the power to help yourself in case the accident should occur."

"What accident!" I inquired, with a nervous sense of some impending danger.

"Falling over; we are on a precipice that is reckoned

dangerous on account of the clay ; if your mule should stumble here, the first thing you would strike would be the branches of some trees five hundred feet below, or thereabout."

"Good Heaven!" I ejaculated ; "is it so?"

"Never fear, captain ; there is not much danger. These mules appear to be sure-footed ; and certainly," added he, with a laugh, "their loads are well packed and tied."

I was in no condition just then to relish a joke, and my companion's humor was completely thrown away upon me. The thought of my mule missing his foot and tumbling over a precipice, while I was stuck to him like a centaur, was anything else than pleasant. I had heard of such accidents, and the knowledge did not make the reflection any easier. I could not help muttering to myself :

"Why, in the name of mischief, did the fellow tell me this till we had passed it?"

I crouched closer to the saddle, allowing my limbs to follow every motion of the animal, lest some counteracting shock might disturb our joint equilibrium. I could hear the torrent, as it roared and hissed far below, appearing directly under us ; and the "sough" grew fainter and fainter as we ascended.

On we went, climbing up—up—up ; our strong mules straining against the precipitous path. It was daybreak. There was a faint glimmer of light under our tapojos. At length we could perceive a brighter beam. We felt a sudden glow of heat over our bodies ; the air seemed lighter ; our mules walked on a horizontal path. We were on the ridge, and warmed by the beams of the rising sun.

"Thank Heaven we have passed it!"

I could not help feeling thus ; and yet perhaps we were riding to an ignominious death!

Home Life of the Uncivilized Indians of Spanish America.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A DRINK À LA CHEVAL.

THE guerilleros now halted and dismounted. We were left in our saddles. Our mules were picketed upon long lazos, and commenced browsing. They carried us under the thorny branches of the wild locust. The maguey, with its bill-shaped claws, had torn our uniform overalls to shreds. Our limbs were lacerated, and the cactus had lodged its poisoned prickles in our knees. But these were nothing to the pain of being compelled to keep our saddles, or rather saddle-trees

—for we were upon the naked wood. Our hips ached intensely, and our limbs smarted under the chafing thong.

There was a crackling of fires around us. Our captors were cooking their breakfast, and chattering gaily over their chocolate. Neither food nor drink was offered to us, although we were both thirsty and hungry. We were kept in this place for about an hour.

"They have joined another party here," said Raoul, "with pack-mules."

"How know you?" I inquired.

"I can tell by the shouts of the arrieros. Listen!—they are making ready to start."

There was a mingling of voices—exclamations addressed to their animals by the arrieros, such as:

"*Mula! anda! vaya! levantate! carra! mula—mutita! —anda!—st!—st!*"

In the midst of this din I fancied that I heard the voice of a woman.

"Can it be——?"

The thought was too painful.

A bugle at length sounded, and we felt ourselves again moving onward.

Our road appeared to run along the naked ridge. There were no trees, and the heat became intense. Our serapés, that had served us during the night, should have been dispensed with now, had we been consulted in relation to the matter. I did not know, until some time after, why these blankets had been given to us, as they had been hitherto very useful in the cold. It was not from any anxiety in regard to our comfort, as I learned afterwards.

We began to suffer from thirst, and Raoul asked one of the guerilleros for water.

"*Carajo!*" answered the man, "it's no use: you'll be choked by and by with something else than thirst."

The brutal jest called forth a peal of laughter from his comrades.

About noon we commenced descending a long hill. I could hear the sound of water ahead.

"Where are we, Raoul?" I inquired faintly.

"Going down to a stream—a branch of the Antigua."

"We are coming to another precipice?" I asked, with some uneasiness, as the roar of the torrent began to be heard more under our feet, and I snuffed the cold air rising from below.

"There is one, captain. There is a good road, though, and well paved."

"Paved! why, the country around is wild—is it not?"

"True; but the road was paved by the priests."

"By the priests!" I exclaimed with some astonishment.

"Yes, captain; there's a convent in the valley, near the crossing; that is, there *was* one. It is now a ruin."

We crept slowly down, our mules at times seeming to walk on their heads. The hissing of the torrent gradually grew louder, until our ears were filled with its hoarse rushing.

I heard Raoul below me shouting some words in a warning voice, when suddenly he seemed borne away, as if he had been tumbled over the precipice.

I expected to feel myself next moment launched after him into empty space, when my mule, uttering a loud whinny, sprang forward and downward.

Down—down! the next leap into eternity! No—she keeps her feet! she gallops along a level path! I am safe!

I was swung about until the thongs seemed to cut through my limbs; and with a heavy plunge I felt myself carried thigh-deep into water.

Here the animal suddenly halted.

As soon as I could gain breath I shouted at the top of my voice for the Frenchman.

"Here, captain!" he answered, close by my side, but, as I fancied, with a strange, gurgling voice.

"Are you hurt, Raoul?" I inquired.

"Hurt? No, captain."

"What was it, then?"

"Oh! I wished to warn you, but I was too late. I might have known they would stampede, as the poor brutes have been no better treated than ourselves. Hear how they draw it up!"

"Good God! I am choking!" I exclaimed, listening to the water as it filtered through the teeth of my mule.

"Do as I do, captain," said Raoul, speaking as if from the bottom of a well.

"How?" I asked.

"Bend down, and let the water run into your mouth."

This accounted for Raoul's voice sounding so strangely.

"They may not give us a drop," continued he. "It is our only chance."

"I have not even that," I replied, after having vainly endeavored to reach the surface with my face.

"Why?" asked my comrade.

"I cannot reach it."

"How deep are you?"

"To the saddle-flaps."

"Ride this way, captain. It's deeper here."

"How can I? My mule is her own master, as far as I am concerned."

"*Parbleu!*" said the Frenchman. "I did not think of that."

But, whether to oblige me, or moved by a desire to cool her flanks, the animal plunged forward into a deeper part of the stream.

After straining myself to the utmost, I was enabled to "duck" my head. In this painful position I contrived to

get a couple of swallows ; but I should think I took in quite as much at my nose and ears.

Clayley and Chane followed our example, the Irishman swearing loudly that it was a "burnin' shame to make a dacent Christyin dhrink like a horse in winkers."

Our guards now commenced driving our mules out of the water. As we were climbing the bank, someone touched me lightly upon the arm ; and at the same instant a voice whispered in my ear, "Courage, captain!"

I started—it was the voice of a female. I was about to reply, when a soft, small hand was thrust under the tapojo, and pushed something between my lips. The hand was immediately withdrawn, and I heard the voice urging a horse onward.

The clatter of hoofs, as of a horse passing me in a gallop, convinced me that this mysterious agent was gone, and I remained silent.

"Who can it be? Jack? No. Jack has a soft voice—a small hand; but how could he be here, and with his hands free? No—no—no! Who then? It was certainly the voice of a woman—the hand, too. What other should have made this demonstration? I know no other—it must—it must have been——"

I continued my analysis of probabilities, always arriving at the same result. It was both pleasant and painful: pleasant to believe *she* was thus, like an angel, watching over me —painful to think that she might be in the power of my fiendish enemy.

But is she so? Lincoln's blow may have ended him. We have heard nothing of him since. Would to heaven——!

It was an impious wish, but I could not control it.

"What have I got between my lips? A slip of paper! Why was it placed there, and not in my bosom or my buttonhole! Ha! there is more providence in the manner of the

act than at first thought appears. How could I have taken it from either the one or the other, bound as I am? Moreover, it may contain what would destroy the writer, if known to—— Cunning thought—for one so young and innocent, too—but love——"

I pressed the paper against the tapojo, covering it with my lips, so as to conceal it in case the blind should be removed.

"Halted again?"

"It is the ruin, captain—the old convent of Santa Bernardina."

"But why do they halt here?

"Likely to noon and breakfast—that on the ridge was only their *desayuna*. The Mexicans of the *tierra caliente* never travel during midday. They will doubtless rest here until the cool of the evening."

"I trust they will extend the same favor to us," said Clayley: "Heaven knows we stand in need of rest. I'd give them three months' pay for an hour upon the treadmill, only to stretch my limbs."

"They will take us down, I think—not on our account, but to ease the mules. Poor brutes! they are no parties to this transaction."

Raoul's conjecture proved correct. We were taken out of our saddles, and, being carefully bound as before, we were hauled into a damp room, and flung down upon the floor. Our captors went out. A heavy door closed after them, and we could hear the regular footfall of a sentry on the stone pavement without. For the first time since our capture we were left alone. This my comrades tested by rolling themselves all over the floor of our prison to see if any one was present with us. It was but a scant addition to our liberty; but we could converse freely, and that was something.

Extracting Oil from Turtles' Eggs. A Substitute for Butter.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN ODD WAY OF OPENING A LETTER.

"HAS any of you heard of Dubrosc on the route?" I inquired of my comrades.

No; nothing had been heard of him since the escape of Lincoln.

"Faix, captain," said the Irishman, "it's meself that thinks Mister Dubrosc won't throuble any ov us any more. It was a purty lick that same, ayquil to ould Donnybrook itself."

"It is not easy to kill a man with a single blow of a clubbed rifle," observed Clayley—"unless, indeed, the lock may have struck into his skull. But *we* are still living, and I think that is some evidence that the deserter is dead. By the way,

how has the fellow obtained such influence as he appeared to have among them, and so soon, too?"

"I think, lieutenant," replied Raoul, "Monsieur Dubrosc has been here before."

"Ha! say you so?" I inquired, with a feeling of anxiety.

"I remember, captain, some story current at Vera Cruz, about a creole having married or run away with a girl of good family there. I am almost certain Dubrosc was the name; but it was before my time, and I am unacquainted with the circumstances. I remember, however, that the fellow was a gambler, or something of the sort and the occurrence made much noise in the country."

I listened with a sickening anxiety to every word of these details. There was a painful correspondence between them and what I already knew. The thought that this monster could be in any way connected with *her* was a disagreeable one. I questioned Raoul no further. Even could he have detailed every circumstance, I should have dreaded the relation.

Our conversation was interrupted by the creaking of a rusty hinge. The door opened, and several men entered. Our blinds were taken off, and, oh, how pleasant to look upon the light! The door had been closed again, and there was only one small grating, yet the slender beam through this was like the bright noonday sun. Two of the men carried earthen platters filled with frijoles, a single tortilla in each platter. They were placed near our heads, one for each of us.

"It's blissid kind of yez, gentlemen," said Chane; "but how are we goin' to ate it, if ye plaze?"

"The plague!" exclaimed Clayley: "do they expect us to lick this up without either hands, spoons, or knives?"

"Won't you allow us the use of our fingers?" asked Raoul, speaking to one of the guerilleros.

"No," replied the man gruffly.

"How do you expect us to eat them?"

"With your mouths, as brutes should. What else?"

"Thank you, sir; you are very polite."

"If you don't choose that, you can leave it alone," added the Mexican, going out with his companions, and closing the door behind them.

"Thank you, gentlemen!" shouted the Frenchman after them, in a tone of subdued anger. "I won't please you so much as to leave it alone. By my word!" he continued, "we may be thankful—it's more than I expected from Yañez—that they've given us any. Something's in the wind." So saying, the speaker rolled himself on his breast, bringing his head to the dish.

"Och! the mane haythins!" cried Chane, following the example set by his comrade; "to make dacent men ate like brute bastes! Och! murder an' ouns!"

"Come, captain; shall we feed?" asked Clayley.

"Go on. Do not wait for me," I replied.

Now was my time to read the note. I rolled myself under the grating, and, after several efforts, succeeded in gaining my feet. The window, which was not much larger than a pigeon-hole, widened inwards like the embrasure of a gun-battery. The lower slab was just the height of my chin; and upon this, after a good deal of dodging and lip-jugglery, I succeeded in spreading out the paper to its full extent.

"What on earth are you at, captain?" inquired Clayley, who had watched my maneuvers with some astonishment.

Raoul and the Irishman stopped their plate-licking and looked up.

"Hush! go on with your dinners—not a word!" I read as follows:

"To-night your cords shall be cut, and you must escape as you best can afterwards. Do not take the road back, as you will be certain to be pursued in that direction; moreover,

you run the risk of meeting other parties of the guerilla. Make for the National Road at San Juan or Manga de Clavo. Your posts are already advanced beyond these points. The Frenchman can easily guide you. Courage, captain! Adieu!

"P. S.—They waited for you. I had sent one to warn you: but he has either proved traitor or missed the road. Adieu! adieu!"

"Good heavens!" I involuntarily exclaimed, "the man that Lincoln——"

I caught the paper into my lips again, and chewed it into a pulp, to avoid the danger of its falling into the hands of the guerilla.

I remained turning over its contents in my mind. I was struck with the masterly style—the worldly cunning exhibited by the writer. There was something almost *unfeminine* about it. I could not help being surprised that one so young, and hitherto so secluded from the world, should possess such a knowledge of men and things. I was already aware of the presence of a powerful intellect, but one, as I thought, altogether unacquainted with practical life and action. Then there was the peculiarity of her situation.

Is she a prisoner like myself? or is she disguised, and periling her life to save mine? or can she be——Patience! To-night may unravel the mystery.

Indian Funeral Rites.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE COBRA-DI-CAPELLO.

UP to this moment my attention had been engrossed with the contents of the note, and I had no thought of looking outward. I raised myself on tiptoe, stretching my neck as far as I could into the embrasure.

A golden sunlight was pouring down upon broad green leaves, where the palms grew wildly. Red vines hung in festoons, like curtains of scarlet satin. There were bands of purple and violet—the maroon colored morus, and the snowy flowers of the magnolia—a glittering opal. Orange-trees, with white, waxlike flowers, were bending under their golden globes. The broad plumes of the corozo palm curved gracefully over, their points trailing downwards and without motion.

A clump of these grew near, their naked stems laced by a parasite of the lliana species, which rose from the earth, and, traversing diagonally, was lost in the feathery frondage above. These formed a canopy, underneath which, from tree to tree, three hammocks were extended. One was empty; the other two were occupied. The elliptical outlines, traceable through the gauzy network of Indian grass, proved that the occupants were females.

Their faces were turned from me. They lay motionless: they were asleep.

As I stood gazing upon this picture, the occupant of the nearest hammock awoke, and turning, with a low murmur upon her lips, again fell asleep. Her face was now towards me. My heart leaped, and my whole frame quivered with emotion. I recognized the features of Guadalupe Rosales.

One limb, cased in silk, had fallen over the selvage of her pendent couch, and hung negligently down. The small satin slipper had dropped off and was lying on the ground. Her head rested upon a silken pillow, and a band of her long black hair, that had escaped from the comb straggling over the cords of the hammock, trailed along the grass. Her bosom rose with a gentle heaving above the network as she breathed and slept.

My heart was full of mixed emotions—surprise, pleasure, love, pain. Yes, pain; for she could thus sleep—sleep sweetly, tranquilly—while I, within a few paces of her couch, was bound and brutally treated!

"Yes, she can sleep!" I muttered to myself, as my chagrin predominated in the tumult of emotions. "Ha! heavens!"

My attention was attracted from the sleeper to a fearful object. I had noticed a spiral-like appearance upon the lliana. It had caught my eye once or twice while looking at the sleeper; but I had not dwelt upon it, taking it for one

vine twined around another—a peculiarity often met with in the forests of Mexico.

A bright sparkle now attracted my eye; and, on looking at the object attentively, I discovered, to my horror, that the spiral protuberance upon the vine was nothing else than the folds of a snake! Squeezing himself silently down the parasite—for he had come from above—the reptile slowly uncoiled two or three of the lowermost rings, and stretched his glistening neck horizontally over the hammock. Now, for the first time, I perceived the horned protuberance on his head, and recognized the dreaded reptile—the *macaurel* (the *cobra* of America).

In this position he remained for some moments, perfectly motionless, his neck proudly curved like that of a swan, while his head was not twelve inches from the face of the sleeper. I fancied that I could see the soft down upon her lip playing under his breath!

He now commenced slowly vibrating from side to side, while a low hissing sound proceeded from his open jaws. His horns projected out, adding to the hideousness of his appearance; and at intervals his forked tongue shot forth, glancing in the sun like a purple diamond.

He appeared to be gloating over his victim, in the act of charming her to death. I even fancied that her lips moved, and her head began to stir backward and forward, following the oscillations of the reptile.

All this I witnessed without the power to move. My soul as well as my body was chained; but, even had I been free, I could have offered no help. I knew that the only hope of her safety lay in silence. Unless disturbed and angered, the snake might not bite; but was he not at that moment distilling some secret venom upon her lips?

"Oh, Heaven!" I gasped out, in the intensity of my fears, "is this the fiend himself? She moves!—now he will

strike! Not yet—she is still again. Now—now!—mercy! she trembles!—the hammock shakes—she is quivering under the fascin—— Ha!"

A shot rang from the walls—the snake suddenly jerked back his head—his rings flew out, and he fell to the earth, writhing as if in pain!

The girls started with a scream, and sprang simultaneously from their hammocks.

Grasping each other by the hand, with terrified looks they rushed from the spot and disappeared.

Several men ran up, ending the snake with their sabers. One of them stooped, and, examining the carcass of the dead reptile, exclaimed:

"*Carai!* there is a hole in his head—he has been shot!"

A moment after, half a dozen of the guerilleros burst open the door and rushed in, crying out as they entered:

"*Quien tira?*" (Who fired?)

"What do you mean!" angrily asked Raoul, who had been in ill-humor ever since the guerillero had refused him a draught of water.

"I ask you who fired the shot?" repeated the man.

"Fired the shot!" echoed Raoul, knowing nothing of what had occurred outside. "We look like firing a shot, don't we? If I possessed that power, my gay friend, the first use I should make of it would be to send a bullet through that clumsy skull of yours."

"*Santissima!*" ejaculated the Mexican, with a look of astonishment. "It could not be these—they are all tied!"

And the Mexicans passed out again, leaving us to our reflections.

The Monkey Duel. The Peace-Maker's Attack from the Rear.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE GUERILLA.

MINE were anything but agreeable. I was pained and puzzled. I was pained to think that *she*—dearer to me than life—was thus exposed to the dangers that surrounded us. It was her sister that had occupied the other hammock.

"Are they alone? Are they prisoners in the hands of these half-robbers? May not their hospitality to us have brought them under proscription? And are they not being carried—father, mother, and all—before some tribunal? Or are they traveling for protection with this band—protection against the less scrupulous robbers that infest the country?"

It was not uncommon upon the Rio Grande, when rich

families journeyed from point to point, to pay for an escort of this sort. This may elucidate——

"But I tell yez I did hear a crack; and, be me sowl! it was the sargint's rifle, or I've lost me sinses intirely."

"What is it?" I asked, attracted to the conversation of my comrades.

"Chane says he heard a shot, and thinks it was Lincoln's," answered Clayley.

"His gun has a quare sound, captain," said the Irishman, appealing to me. "It's diffirint intirely from a Mexican piece, and not like our own nayther. It's a way he has in loadin' it."

"Well—what of that?"

"Why, Raowl says one of them axed him who fired. Now, I heerd a shot, for my ear was close till the door here. It was beyant like; but I cud swear upon the blissed crass it was ayther the sargint's rifle or another as like it as two pays."

"It is very strange!" I muttered, half in soliloquy, for the same thought had occurred to myself.

"I saw the boy, captain," said Raoul—"I saw him crossing when they opened the door."

"The boy!—what boy?" I asked.

"The same we brought out of the town."

"Ha! Narcisso!—you saw him?"

"Yes; and, if I'm not mistaken, the white mule that the old gentleman rode to camp. I think that the family is with the guerilla, and that accounts for our being still alive."

A new light flashed upon me. In the incidents of the last twenty hours I had never once thought of Narcisso. Now all was clear—clear as daylight. The zambo whom Lincoln had killed—poor victim!—was our friend, sent to warn us of danger; the dagger, Narcisso's—a token for us to trust

him. The soft voice—the small hand thrust under the tapojo—yes, all were Narcisso's!

A web of mystery was torn to shreds in a single moment. The truth did not yield gratification. No—but the contrary. I was chagrined at the indifference exhibited in another quarter.

"She must know that I am here, since her brother is master of the fact—here, bleeding and bound. Yet where is her sympathy? She sleeps! She journeys within a few paces of me, where I am tied painfully; yet not a word of consolation. No! She is riding upon her soft cushion, or carried upon a *litera*, escorted, perhaps, by this accomplished villain, who plays the gallant cavalier upon my own barb! They converse together, perhaps of the poor captives in their train, and with jest and ridicule—he at least; and *she* can hear it, and then fling herself into her soft hammock and sleep—sleep sweetly—calmly!"

These bitter reflections were interrupted. The door creaked once more upon its hinges. Half a dozen of our captors entered. Our blinds were put on, and we were carried out and mounted as before.

In a few minutes a bugle rang out, and the route was resumed.

We were carried up the stream bottom—a kind of glen, or *cañada*. We could feel by the cool shade and the echoes that we were traveling under heavy timber. The torrent roared in our ears, and the sound was not unpleasant. Twice or thrice we forded the stream, and sometimes left it, returning after having traveled a mile or so. This was to avoid the *cañons*, where there is no path by the water. We then ascended a long hill, and after reaching its summit commenced going downwards.

"I know this road well," said Raoul. "We are going down to the hacienda of Cenobio."

"*Pardieu!*" he continued. "I ought to know this hill?"

"For what reason?"

"First, captain, because I have carried many a *bulto* of cochineal and many a bale of smuggled tobacco over it; ay, and upon nights when my eyes were of as little service to me as they are at present."

"I thought that you *contrabandistas* hardly needed the precaution of dark nights?"

"True, at times; but there were other times when the Government became lynx-eyed, and then smuggling was no joke. We had some sharp skirmishing. Carrambo! I have good cause to remember this very hill. I came near making a jump into purgatory from the other side of it."

"Ha! how was that?"

"Cenobio had got a large lot of cochineal from a crafty trader at Oaxaca. It was *cachéd* about two leagues from the hacienda in the hills, and a vessel was to drop into the mouth of the Medellin to take it on board.

"A party of us were engaged to carry it across to the coast; and, as the cargo was very valuable, we were all of us armed to the teeth, with orders from the *patrone* to defend it at all hazards. His men were just the fellows who would obey that order, coming, as it did, from Cenobio.

"The Government somehow or other got wind of the affair, and slipped a strong detachment out of Vera Cruz in time to intercept us. We met them on the other side of this very hill, where a road strikes off towards Medellin."

"Well! and what followed?"

"Why, the battle lasted nearly an hour; and, after having lost half a score of their best men, the valiant lancers rode back to Vera Cruz quicker than they came out of it."

"And the smugglers?"

"Carried the goods safe on board. Three of them—poor

fellows!—are lying not far off, and I came near sharing their luck. I have a lance-hole through my thigh here, that pains me at this very moment. Oh, Moses!"

My ear at this moment caught the sound of dogs barking hoarsely below. Horses of the cavalcade commenced neighing, answered by others from the adjacent fields, who recognized their old companions.

"It must be near night," I remarked to Raoul.

"I think about sunset, captain," rejoined he. "It *feels* about that time."

I could not help smiling. There was something ludicrous in my comrade's remark about "feeling" the sunset.

The barking of the dogs now ceased, and we could hear voices ahead welcoming the guerilleros.

The hoofs of our mules struck upon a hard pavement, and the sounds echoed as if under an arched way.

Our animals were presently halted, and we were unpacked and flung rudely down upon rough stones, like so many bundles of merchandise.

We lay for some minutes listening to the strange voices around. The neighing of horses, the barking and growling of dogs, the lowing of cattle, the shouts of the arrieros unpacking their mules, the clanking of sabers along the stone pavement, the tinkling of spurs, the laughter of men, and the voices of women—all were in our ears at once.

Two men approached us, conversing.

"They are of the party that escaped us at La Virgen. Two of them are officers."

"*Chingaro!* I got this at La Virgen, and a full half-mile off. "Twas some black jugglery in their bullets. I hope the *patrone* will hang the Yankee savages."

"*Quien sabe?*" (Who knows?), replied the first speaker. "Pinzon has been taken this morning at Puenta Moreno, with several others. They had a fandango with the Yankee

dragoons. You know what the old man thinks of Pinzon. He'd sooner part with his wife."

"You think he will exchange them, then?"

"It is not unlikely."

"And yet he wouldn't trouble much if you or I had been taken. No—no; he'd let us be hanged like dogs."

"Well; that's always the way, you know."

"I begin to get tired of him. By the Virgin! José, I've half a mind to slip off and join the Padré."

"Jarauta?"

"Yes; he's by the Bridge, with a brave set of Jarochos—some of our old comrades upon the Rio Grande among them. They are living at free quarters along the road, and having gay times of it, I hear. If Jarauta had taken these Yankees yesterday, the zopiloté would have made his dinner upon them to-day."

"That's true," rejoined the other; "but come—let us unblind the devils and give them their beans. It may be the last they'll ever eat."

With this consoling remark, José commenced unbuckling our tapojos, and we once more looked upon the light. The brilliance at first dazzled us painfully, and it was some minutes before we could look steadily at the objects around us.

We had been thrown upon the pavement in the corner of the *patio*—a large court, surrounded by massive walls and flat-roofed houses.

These buildings were low, single-storied, except the range in front, which contained the principal dwellings. The remaining three sides were occupied by stables, granaries, and quarters for the guerilleros and servants. A portale extended along the front range, and large vases, with shrubs and flowers, ornamented the balustrade. The portale was screened from the sun by curtains of bright-colored cloth.

These were partially drawn, and objects of elegant furniture appeared within.

Near the center of the patio was a large fountain, boiling up into a reservoir of hewn mason-work; and around this fountain were clumps of orange-trees, their leaves in some places dropping down into the water. Various arms hung or leaned against the walls—guns, pistols, and sabers—and two small pieces of cannon, with their caissons and carriages, stood in a prominent position. In these we recognized our old acquaintance of La Virgen.

A long trough stretched across the patio, and out of this a double row of mules and mustangs were greedily eating maize. The saddle-tracks upon their steaming sides showed them to be the companions of our late wearisome journey.

Huge dogs lay basking upon the hot stones, growling at intervals as some one galloped in through the great doorway. Their broad jaws and tawny hides bespoke the Spanish bloodhound—the descendants of that race with which Cortez had harried the conquered Aztecs.

The guerilleros were seated or standing in groups around the fires, broiling jerked beef upon the points of their sabers. Some mended their saddles, or were wiping out an old carbine or a clumsy escopette. Some strutted around the yard, swinging their bright mangas, or trailing after them the picturesque serapé. Women in rebozos and colored skirts walked to and fro among the men.

The women carried jars filled with water. They knelt before smooth stones, and kneaded tortillas. They stirred chilé and chocolate in earthen olias. They cooked frijoles in flat pans; and amidst all these occupations they joked and laughed and chatted with the men.

Several men—officers, from their style of dress—came out of the portale, and, after delivering orders to the guerilleros on guard, returned to the house.

Packages of what appeared to be merchandise lay in one corner of the court. Around this were groups of arrieros, in their red leathern garments, securing their charge for the night, and laying out their *alparejas* in long rows by the wall.

Over the opposite roofs—for our position was elevated—we could see the bright fields and forest, and far beyond, the Cofre de Peroté and the undulating outlines of the Andes. Above all the white-robed peak of Orizava rose up against the heavens like a pyramid of spotless snow.

The sun had gone down behind the mountains, but his rays still rested upon Orizava, bathing its cone with a yellow light, like a mantle of burnished gold. Clouds of red, and white, and purple hung like a glory upon his track, and, descending, rested upon the lower summits of the Cordillera. The peak of the "Burning Star" alone appeared above the clouds, towering in sublime and solitary grandeur.

There was a picturesque loveliness about the scene—an idea of sublimity—that caused me for the moment to forget where I was, or that I was a captive. My dream was dispelled by the harsh voice of José, who at that moment came up with a couple of peons, carrying a large earthen dish that contained our supper.

This consisted of black beans with half a dozen tortillas; but as we were all half famished, we did not offer any criticism on the quality of the viands. The dish was placed in our midst, and our arms were untied for the first time since our capture. There were neither knives, forks, nor spoons; but Raoul showed us the Mexican fashion of "eating our spoons," and, twisting up the tortillas, we scooped and swallowed "right ahead."

Mexican Women Kneading Tortillas.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CHANE'S COURTSHIP.

THE dish was emptied, as Clayley observed in a "squirrel's jump."

"Be my sowl! it ates purty well, black as it is," said Chane, looking ruefully into the empty vessels. "It's got a worse complaint than the color. Cudn't yez fetch us a thrifle more of it, my darlint boy?" he added, squinting up at José.

"*No entiende*," said the Mexican, shaking his head.

"No in tin days!" cried Chane, mistaking the "*no entiende*" for a phrase of broken English, to which indeed, its pronunciation somewhat assimilates it. "Och! git out wid

you! Bad luck to yer picther! In tin days it's Murtagh Chane that'll ayther be takin' his tay in purgathory or atin' betther than black banes in some other part of the world."

"*No entiende*," repeated the Mexican as before.

"Tin days indade! Sure we'd be did wid hunger in half the time. We want the banes *now*."

"*No entiende, señor*," again replied the man.

"Go to owld Nick!" cried Chane, whose patience was now exhausted.

"*Qué quiere?*" asked the Mexican, speaking to Raoul, who was by this time convulsed with laughter.

"Phwhat's that he sez, Raowl?" inquired Chane sharply.

"He says he don't understand you."

"Thin spake to him yerself, Raowl. Till him we want more banes, and a few more ov thim pancakes, if he plazes."

Raoul translated the Irishman's request.

"*No hay*," answered the Mexican, shaking his forefinger in front of his nose.

"No I—is that phwhat ye say, my darlint? Well, iv yez won't go yerself, sind somebody else; it's all the same thing, so yez bring us the ateables."

"*No entiende*," said the man, with the same shake of the head.

"Oh! there agin with your tin days—but it's no use; yez understand me well enough, but yez don't want to bring the banes."

"He tells you there is no more," said Raoul.

"Oh! the desavin' Judas! and five hundred ov thim grazers atin' over beyant there. No more banes! oh, the lie!"

"*Frijoles—no hay*," said the Mexican, guessing at the purport of Chane's remarks.

"Fray holeys!" repeated Chane, imitating the Mexican's pronunciation of the word "frijoles." "Och! git out wid

your fray holeys! There isn't the size of a flay of holiness about the place. Git out!"

Raoul, and indeed all of us except the Irishman himself, were bursting with laughter.

"I'm chokin'," said the latter, after a pause; "ask him for wather, Raowl—sure he can't deny that, with that purty little sthrame boilin' up undher our noses, as clear as the potteen of Ennishowen."

Raoul asked for water, which we all needed. Our throats were as dry as charcoal. The Mexican made a sign to one of the women, who shortly came up with an earthern jar filled with water.

"Give it first to the captain, misthress," said Chane, pointing to me; "sarve all ayqually, but respict rank."

The woman understood the sign, and handed me the jar. I drank copiously, passing it to my comrades, Clayley and Raoul. Chane at length took the jar; but instead of drinking immediately, as might have been expected, he set it between his knees and looked quizzically up at the woman.

"I say, my little darlint," said he, winking, and touching her lightly under the ribs with his outstretched palm, "my little *moochacha*—that's what they call thim—isn't it, Raowl?"

"*Muchacha?* oh yes."

"Well thin, my purty little *moochacha*, cudn't yez—ye know what I mane. Cudn't yez——? Och! ye know well enough—only a little—jist a mouthful to take the cowld taste aff the wather."

"*No entiende*," said the woman, smiling good-naturedly at Chane's comical gestures.

"Och, the plague! there's that tin days agin. Talk to her, Raowl. Tell her what I mane."

Raoul translated his comrade's wishes.

"Tell her, Raowl, I've got no money, because I have been rabbed, de ye see; but I'll give her ayther of these saints for the smallest thrifle of agwardent;" and he pulled the images out of his jacket as he spoke.

The woman, seeing these, bent forward with an exclamation; and, recognizing the crucifix, with the images of the saint and Virgin, dropped upon her knees and kissed them devoutly, uttering some words in a language half Spanish, half Aztec.

Rising up, she looked kindly at Chane, exclaiming, "*Bueno Catolico!*" She then tossed the rebozo over her left shoulder, and hurried off across the yard.

"De yez think, Raowl, she's gone after the licker?"

"I am sure of it," answered the Frenchman.

In a few minutes the woman returned, and drawing a small flask out of the folds of her rebozo, handed it to Chane.

The Irishman commenced undoing the string that carried his "relics."

"Which ov them de yez want, misthress?—the saint, or the Howly Mother, or both?—it's all the same to Murtagh."

The woman, observing what he was after, rushed forward, and, placing her hands upon his, said in a kind tone:

"*No, señor. Su proteccion necesita usted.*"

"Phwhat diz she say, Raowl?"

"She says, keep them, you will need their protection yourself."

"Och, be me sowl! she's not far asthray there. I need it bad enough now, an' a hape ov good they're likely to do me. They've hung there for tin years—both of thim; and this nate little flask's the first raal binifit I iver resaved from ayther of them. Thry it, captin. I'll do yez good."

I took the bottle and drank. It was the *chingarito*—a bad species of *aguardiente* from the wild aloe—and hot as

fire. A mouthful sufficed. I handed the flask to Clayley, who drank more freely. Raoul followed suit, and the bottle came back to the Irishman.

"Your hilth, darlint!" said he, nodding to the Mexican woman. "May yez live till *I* wish ye dead!"

The woman smiled, and repeated, "*No entiende.*"

"Och! nivir mind the tin days—we won't quarrel about that. Ye're a swate crayteur," continued he, winking at the woman; "but sure yer petticoats is mighty short, an' yez want a pair of stockin's bad, too; but nivir mind—yez stand well upon thim illigant ankles—'dade ye do; and yez have a purty little futt into the bargain."

"*Qué dice?*" (What does he say?), asked the Mexican, speaking to Raoul.

"He is complimenting you on the smallness of your feet." answered the Frenchman.

The woman was evidently pleased, and commenced cramping up what was in fact a very small foot into its faded satin slipper.

"Tell me, my dear," continued Chane, "are yez married?"

"*Qué dice?*" again asked the woman.

"He wants to know if you are married."

She smiled, waving her forefinger in front of her nose.

Raoul informed the Irishman that this was a negative answer to his question.

"By my sowl, thin," said Chane, "I wudn't mind marryin' ye meself, an' joinin' the thribe—that is, if they'll let me off from the hangin'. Tell her that, Raowl."

As desired, Raoul explained his comrade's last speech, at which the woman laughed, but said nothing.

"Silence gives consint. But tell her, Raowl, that I won't buy a pig in a poke: they must first let me off from the hangin', de ye hear?—tell her that."

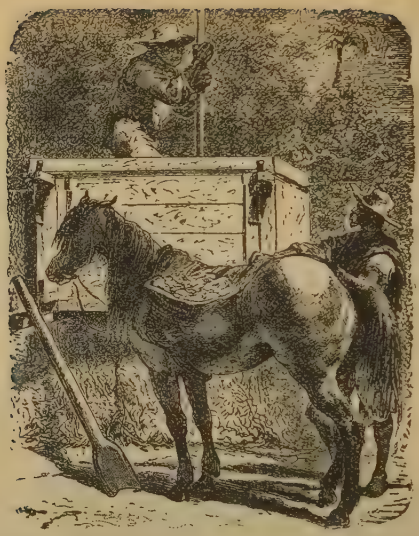
"*El señor está muy alegre*" (The gentleman is very merry),

said the woman; and, picking up her jar, with a smile, she left us.

"I say, Raowl, does she consint?"

"She hasn't made up her mind yet."

"By the holy vistment! thin it's all up wid Murt. The saints won't save him. Take another dhrap, Raowl!"



Moulding Brick for Constructing Adobé Buildings.

CHAPTER XL.

THE DANCE OF THE TAGAROTA.

NIGHT fell, and the blazing fagots threw their glare over the patio, striking upon objects picturesque at all times, but doubly so under the red light of the pine fires. The grouping of guerilleros—their broad, heavy hats, many of them plumed—their long black hair and pointed beards—their dark, flashing eyes—their teeth, fierce and white—the half savage expression of their features—their costumes, high-colored and wild-like—all combined in impressing us with strange feelings.

The mules, the mustangs, the dogs, the peons, the slippered wenches, with their coarse trailing tresses, the low

roofs, the iron-barred windows, the orange-trees by the fountain, the palms hanging over the wall, the glistening cocuyos were all strange sights to us.

The sounds that rang in our ears were not more familiar. Even the voices of the men, unlike the Saxon, sounded wild and sharp. It was the Spanish language, spoken in the *patois* of the Aztec Indians. In this the guerilleros chatted and sang, and swore. There was a medley of other sounds, not less strange to our ears, as the dogs howled and barked their blood-hound notes—as the mustangs neighed or the mules whinnied—as the heavy saber clanked or the huge spur tinkled its tiny bells—as the *poblanas*, sitting by some group, touched the strings of their bandolons, and chanted their half-Indian songs.

By a blazing pile, close to where we sat, a party of guerilleros, with their women, were dancing the *tagarota*, a species of fandango.

The men had thrown aside their heavy hats and accouterments. Some of them had unbuttoned the legs of their calzoneros, and tucked them up to the waist, *à la Bedouin*. The women had cast off their rebozos, leaving a light sleeveless chemise as the only covering between their bosoms and the light, while their flaming petticoats were short enough to have suited a Parisian coryphée.

Two men, seated upon raw-hide stools, strummed away upon a pair of bandolons, while a third pinched and pulled at the strings of an old guitar—all three aiding the music with their shrill, disagreeable voices.

The dancers formed the figures of a parallelogram, each standing opposite his partner, or rather moving, for they were never at rest, but kept constantly beating time with feet, head, and hands. The last they struck against their cheeks and thighs, and at intervals clapped them together.

One would suddenly appear as a hunchback, and, dancing

out into the center of the figure, perform various antics to attract his partner. After a while she would dance up—deformed also—and the two, bringing their bodies in contact, and performing various disgusting contortions, would give place to another pair. These would appear without arms or legs, walking on their knees, or sliding along on their hips!

One danced with his head under his arm, and another with one leg around his neck: all eliciting more or less laughter, as the feat was more or less comical. During the dance every species of deformity was imitated and caricatured, for this is the tagarota. It was a series of grotesque and repulsive pictures. Some of the dancers, flinging themselves flat, would roll across the open space without moving hand or foot. This always elicited applause, and we could not help remarking its resemblance to the gymnastics we had lately been practising ourselves.

"Och, be me sowl! we can bate yez at that!" cried Chane, who appeared to be highly amused at the tagarota, making his comments as the dance went on.

I was sick of the scene, and watched it no longer. My eyes turned to the portale, and I looked anxiously through the half-drawn curtains.

"It is strange I have seen nothing of *them!* Could they have turned off on some other route? No—they must be here. Narcisso's promise for to-night! He at least is here. And she?—perhaps occupied within—gay, happy, indifferent—oh!"

The pain shot afresh through my heart.

Suddenly the curtain was drawn aside, and a brilliant picture appeared within—brilliant, but to me like the glimpse which some condemned spirit might catch over the walls of Paradise. Officers in bright uniforms, and amongst these I recognized the elegant person of Dubrosc. Ladies in rich dresses, and amongst these——. Her sister, too, was there,

and the Doña Joaquina, and a half a dozen other ladies rustling in silks and blazing with jewels.

Several of the gentlemen—young officers of the band—wore the picturesque costumes of the guerilleros.

They were forming for the dance.

"Look, captain!" cried Clayley: "Don Cosmé and his people, by the living earthquake!"

"Hush! do not touch me—do not speak to me!"

I felt as though my heart would stop beating. It rose in my bosom, and seemed to hang for minutes without moving. My throat felt dry and husky, and a cold perspiration broke out upon my skin.

He approaches her—he asks her to dance—she consents! No; she refuses. Brave girl! She has strayed away from the dancers, and looks over the balustrade. She is sad. Was it a sigh that caused her bosom to rise? Ha! he comes again. She is smiling!—he touches her hand!

"Fiend! false woman!" I shouted at the top of my voice as I sprang up, impelled by passion. I attempted to rush towards them. My feet were bound, and I fell heavily upon my face!

The guards seized me, tying my hands. My comrades, too, were rebound. We were dragged over the stones into a small room in one corner of the patio.

The door was bolted and locked, and we were left alone.

CHAPTER XLI.

A KISS IN THE DARK.

IT would be impossible to describe my feelings as I was flung upon the floor of our prison. This was cold damp, and filthy; but I heeded not these grievances. Greater sorrows absorbed the less. There is no torture so racking, no pain so painful as the throbbings of a jealous heart; but how much harder to bear under circumstances like mine! She could sleep, smile, dance—dance by my prison, and with my jailer!

I felt spiteful—vengeful. I was stung to a desire for retaliation, and along with this came an eagerness to live for the opportunity of indulging in this passion.

I began to look around our prison, and see what chances it offered for escape.

"Good heavens! if our being transferred to the cell should

destroy the plans of Narcisso! How is he to reach us? The door is doubled-locked, and a sentry is pacing without."

After several painful efforts I raised myself upon my feet, propping my body against the side of the prison. There was an aperture—a window about as large as a loophole for musketry. I spun myself along the wall until I stood directly under it. It was just the height of my chin. Cautioning my companions to silence, I placed my ear to the aperture and listened. A low sound came wailing from the fields without. I did not heed this. I knew it was the wolf. It rose again louder than before. A peculiarity in the howl struck me, and I turned, calling to Raoul.

"What is it, captain?" inquired he.

"Do you know if the prairie wolf is found here?"

"I do not know if it be the true prarie wolf, captain. There is one something like the *coyote*."

I returned to the aperture and listened.

"Again the howl of the prairie wolf—the bark! By heavens! it is Lincoln!"

Now it ceased for several minutes, and there came again, but from another direction.

"What is to be done? If I answer him, it will alarm the sentry. I will wait until he comes closer to the wall."

I could tell that he was creeping nearer and nearer.

Finding he had not been answered, the howling ceased. I stood listening eagerly to every sound from without. My comrades, who had now become apprised of Lincoln's proximity, had risen to their feet and were leaning against the walls.

We were about half an hour in this situation, without exchanging a word, when a light tap was heard from without, and a soft voice whispered:

"*Hola, Capitan!*"

I placed my ear to the aperture. The whisper was repeated. It was not Lincoln—that was clear.

It must be Narcisso.

"*Quien?*" I asked.

"*Yo, Capitan.*"

I recognized the voice that had addressed me in the morning.

It is Narcisso.

"Can you place your hands in the aperture?" said he.

"No; they are tied behind my back."

"Can you bring them opposite then?"

"No; I am standing on my toes, and my wrists are still far below the sill."

"Are your comrades all similarly bound?"

"All."

"Let one get on each side of you, and raise you up on their shoulders."

Wondering at the astuteness of the young Spaniard I ordered Chane and Raoul to lift me as he directed.

When my wrists came opposite the window I cautioned them to hold on. Presently a soft hand touched mine, passing all over them. Then I felt the blade of a knife pressed against the thong, and in an instant it leaped from my wrists. I ordered the men to set me down, and I listened as before.

"Here is the knife. You can release your own ankles and those of your comrades. This paper will direct you further. You will find the lamp inside."

A knife, with a folded and strangely shining note, was passed through by the speaker.

"And now, capitan—one favor," continued the voice, in a trembling tone.

"Ask it! ask it!"

"I would kiss your hand before we part."

"Dear noble boy!" thrusting my hand into the aperture.

"Boy! ah, true—you think me a boy, I am no boy, capitan, but *a woman—one who loves you with all her blighted, broken heart!*"

"Oh heavens! It is, then—dearest Guadalupe!"

"Ha!" I thought as much. Now I will not. But, no; what good would it be to me? No—no—no! I shall keep my word."

This appeared to be uttered in soliloquy, and the tumult of my thoughts prevented me from noticing the strangeness of these expressions. I thought of them afterwards.

"Your hand! your hand!" I ejaculated.

"You would kiss my hand? Do so!" The little hand was thrust through, and I could see it in the dim light, flashing with brilliants. I caught it in mine, covering it with kisses. It seemed to yield to the fervid pressure of my lips.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, in the transport of my feelings, "let us not part; let us fly together! I was wronging you, loveliest, dearest Guadalupe——"

A slight exclamation, as if from some painful emotion, and the hand was plucked away, leaving one of the diamonds in my fingers. The next moment the voice whispered, with a strange sadness of tone, as I thought:

"Adieu, capitan! adieu! *In this world of life we never know who best loves us!*"

I was puzzled, bewildered. I called out, but there was no answer. I listened until the patience of my comrades was well-nigh exhausted, but still there was no voice from without; and with a strange feeling of uneasiness and wonderment I commenced cutting the thongs from my ankles.

Having set Raoul at liberty, I handed him the knife, and proceeded to open the note. Inside I found a cocuyo; and, using it as I had been already instructed, I read:

"*The walls are adobe. You have a knife. The side with the loophole fronts outward. There is a field of magueys, and beyond this you will find the forest. You may then trust to yourselves. I can help you no further.* Carrissimo cabellero adios!"

I had no time to reflect upon the peculiarities of the note, though the boldness of the style struck me as corresponding with the other. I flung down the firefly, crushing the paper into my bosom; and seizing the knife, was about to attack the adobé wall, when voices reached me from without. I sprang forward, and placed my ear to listen. It was an altercation—a woman—a man! "By heaven! it is Lincoln's voice!"

"Yer cussed whelp! ye'd see the cap'n hung would yer?—a man that's good vally for the full of a pararer of green-gutted greasers; but I ain't a-gwine to let *you* look at his hangin'. If yer don't show me which of these hyur pigeon-holes is his'n, an' help me to get him outer it, I'll skin yer like a mink!"

"I tell you, Mister Lincoln," replied a voice which I recognized as the one whose owner had just left me, "I have this minute given the captain the means of escape, through that loophole."

"Whar!"

"This one," answered the female voice.

"Wal, that's easy to circumstantiate. Kum along hyur! I ain't a-gwine to let yer go till it's all fixed. De ye hear?"

I heard the heavy foot of the hunter as he approached, and presently his voice calling through the loophole in a guarded whisper:

"Cap'n!"

"Hush, Bob!" it's all right," I replied, speaking in a low tone, for the sentries were moving suspiciously around the door.

"Good!" ejaculated he. "Yer kin go now," he added to the other, whose attention I endeavored to attract, but dared not call to loud enough, lest the guards should hear me. "Dash my buttons! I don't want yer to go—yer a good 'un arter all. Why can't yer kum along? The cap'n 'ill make it all straight agin about the disartion."

"Mr. Lincoln, I cannot go with you. Please suffer me to depart."

"Wal! yer own likes! but if I kin do yer a good turn, you can depend on Bob Linkin—mind that."

"Thank you! thank you!"

And before I could interfere to prevent it, she was gone. I could hear the voice, sad and sweet in the distance, calling back, "*Adios!*"

I had no time for reflection, else the mystery that surrounded me would have occupied my thoughts for hours. It was time to act. Again I heard Lincoln's voice at the loophole.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"How are yer ter get out, cap'n?"

"We are cutting a hole through the wall."

"If yer can give me the spot, I'll meet yer half-ways."

I measured the distance from the loophole, and handed the string to Lincoln. We heard no more from the hunter until the moonlight glanced through the wall upon the blade of his knife. Then he uttered a short ejaculation, such as may be heard from the "mountain men" at peculiar crises; and after that we could hear him exclaiming:

"Look out, Rowl! Hang it, man! ye're a-cuttin' my claws!"

In a few minutes the hole was large enough to pass our bodies; and one by one we crawled out, and were once more at liberty.

A Cactus Desert in the Cordilleras.

CHAPTER XLII.

MARIA DE MERCED.

THERE was a deep ditch under the wall, filled with cactus-plants and dry grass. We lay in the bottom of this for some minutes, panting with fatigue. Our limbs were stiff and swollen, and we could hardly stand upright. A little delay then was necessary, to bring back the blood and determine our future course.

"We had best ter keep the gully," whispered Lincoln. "I kum across the fields myself, but that 'ar kiver's thin, and they may sight us."

"The best route is the ditch," assented Raoul: "there are some windows, but they are high, and we can crawl under them."

"Forward, then!" I whispered to Raoul.

We crept down the ditch on all fours, passing several windows that were dark and shut. We reached one, the last in the row, where the light streamed through. Notwithstanding our perilous situation, I resolved to look in. There was an impulse upon me which I could not resist. I was yearning for some clue to the mystery that hung around me.

The window was high up, but it was grated with heavy bars; and, grasping two of these, I swung myself to its level. Meanwhile my comrades had crept into the magueys to wait for me.

I raised my head cautiously and looked in. It was a room somewhat elegantly furnished, but my eye did not dwell long on that. A man sitting by the table engrossed my attention. This man was Dubrosc. The light was full upon his face, and I gazed upon its hated lines until I felt my frame trembling with passion.

I can give no idea of the hate this man had inspired me with. Had I possessed fire-arms, I could not have restrained myself from shooting him; and but for the iron grating, I should have sprung through the sash and grappled him with my hands. I have thought since that some providence held me back from making a demonstration that would have baffled our escape. I am sure at that moment I possessed no restraint within myself.

As I gazed at Dubrosc, the door of the apartment opened, and a young man entered. He was strangely attired, in a

costume half military, half ranchero. There was a fineness, a silky richness, about the dress and manner of this youth that struck me. His features were dark and beautiful.

He advanced and sat down by the table, placing his hand upon it. Several rings sparkled upon his fingers. I observed that he was pale, and that his hand trembled.

After looking at him for a moment, I began to fancy I had seen the features before. It was not Narcisso ; him I should have known ; and yet there was a resemblance. Yes—he even resembled *her!* I started as this thought crossed me. I strained my eyes ; the resemblance grew stronger.

Oh, Heaven ! could it be ?—dressed thus ? No, no ! those eyes—ha ! I remember ! The boy at the rendezvous—on board the transport—the island—the picture ! It is she—the cousin—*Maria de Merced !*

These recollections came with the suddenness of a single thought, and passed as quickly. Later memories crowded upon me. The adventure of the morning—the strange words uttered at the window of my prison—the small hand ! This, then, was the author of our deliverance.

A hundred mysteries were explained in a single moment. The unexpected elucidation came like a shock—like a sudden light. I staggered back, giving way to new and singular emotions.

"Guadalupe knows nothing of my presence, then. *She* is innocent."

This thought alone restored me to happiness. A thousand others rushed through my brain in quick succession —some pleasant, others painful.

There was an altercation of voices over my head. I caught the iron rods, and, resting my toes upon a high bank, swung my body up, and again looked into the room. Dubrosc was now angrily pacing over the floor.

"Bah!" he ejaculated, with a look of cold brutality; "you think to make me jealous, I believe. That isn't possible. I was never so, and *you* can't do it. I know you love the cursed Yankee. I watched you in the ship—on the island, too. You had better keep him company where he is going. Ha! ha! Jealous, indeed! Your pretty cousins have grown up since I saw them last."

The insinuation sent the blood in a hot stream through my veins.

It appeared to have a similar effect upon the woman; for starting from her seat, she looked towards Dubrosc, her eyes flashing like globes of fire.

"Yes!" she exclaimed; "and if you dare whisper your polluting thoughts to either of them, lawless as is this land, you know that I still possess the power to punish *you*. You are villain enough, Heaven knows, for anything; but *they* shall not fall: one victim is enough—and such a one!"

"Victim, indeed!" replied the man, evidently cowed by the other's threat. "You call yourself victim, Marie? The *wife* of the handsomest man in Mexico? Ha! ha!"

There was something of irony in the latter part of the speech, and the emphasis placed on the word "wife."

"Yes; you may well taunt me with your false priest, you unfeeling wretch! *Oh, Santisima Madre!*" continued she, dropping back into her chair, and pressing her head between her hands. "Beguiled—beggared—almost unsexed! and yet I never loved the man! It was not love, but madness—madness and fascination!"

The last words were uttered in soliloquy, as though she regarded not the presence of her companion.

"I don't care a claco," cried he fiercely, and evidently piqued at her declaration—"not one claco whether you ever loved me or not! That's not the question now, but *this is:* You must make yourself known to your Crœsus of an

uncle here, and demand that part of your fortune that he still clutches within his avaricious old fingers. You must do this to-morrow."

"I will not!"

"But you shall, or——"

The woman rose suddenly, and walked towards the door as if she intended to go out.

"No, not to-night, dearest," said Dubrosc, grasping her rudely by the arm. "I have my reasons for keeping you here. I noted you to-day speaking with that cursed Yankee, and you're just traitor enough to help him to escape. I'll look to him myself, so you may stay where you are. If you should choose to rise early enough to-morrow morning, you will have the felicity of seeing him dance upon the tight-rope. Ha! ha! ha!"

And with a savage laugh the creole walked out of the room, locking the door behind him.

A strange expression played over the features of the woman—a blending of triumph with anxiety. She ran forward to the window, and, pressing her small lips close to the glass, strained her eyes outward.

I held the diamond in my fingers, and, stretching up until my hand was opposite her face, I wrote the word "*Gracias*."

At first seeing me she had started back. There was no time to be lost. My comrades were already chafing at my delay; and, joining them, we crept through the magueys, parting the broad, stiff leaves with our fingers. We were soon upon the edge of the chapparal wood.

I looked back towards the window. The woman stood holding the lamp, and its light was full upon her face. She had read the scrawl, and was gazing out with an expression I shall never forget. Another bound, and we were "in the woods."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE PURSUIT.

Hanging Nests of the Tropical Weaver Birds.

FOR a time there was a strange irresolution in my flight. The idea of leaving Guadalupe in such company—that after all they might be prisoners, or, even if not, the thought that they were in the power of Dubrosc to any extent—was enough to render me wretched and irresolute. But what could we do—five men, almost unarmed?

"It would be madness to remain — madness and death. The woman — she possesses some mysterious power over this brute, her paramour; she will guard them."

This thought decided me, and I yielded myself freely to flight. We had but little fear of being caught again. We had too much confidence, particularly Lincoln and myself, in our forest-craft. Raoul knew all the country, the thickets and the passes. We stopped a moment to deliberate on the track we should take. A bugle rang out behind us, and the next instant

the report of a cannon thundered in a thousand echoes along the glen.

"It is from the hacienda," said Raoul; "they have missed us already."

"Is that 'sign,' Rowl?" asked Lincoln.

"It is," replied the other; "it's to warn their scouts. They're all over these hills. We must look sharp."

"I don't like this hyur timber; it's too scant. Cudn't yer put us in the crik bottom, Rowl?"

"There's a heavy chapparal," said the Frenchman, musing; "it's ten miles off. If we could reach that we're safe—a wolf can hardly crawl through it. We must make it before day."

"Lead on, then, Rowl!"

We stole along with cautious steps. The rustling of a leaf or the cracking of a dead stick might betray us; for we could hear signals upon all sides, and our pursuers passing us in small parties, within earshot.

We bore to the right, in order to reach the creek bottom of which Lincoln had spoken. We soon came into this, and followed the stream down, but not on the bank. Lincoln would not hear of our taking the bank path, arguing that our pursuers would be "sartin ter foller the cl'ar trail."

The hunter was right, for shortly after a party came down the stream. We could hear the clinking of their accouterments, and even the conversation of some of the men, as follows:

"But, in the first place, how did they get loose within? and who cut the wall from the outside, unless some one helped them? *Carajo!* it's not possible."

"That's true, José," said another voice. "Some one must, and I believe it was that giant that got away from us at the rancho. The shot that killed the snake came from the chapparal, and yet we searched and found nobody. Mark my words, it was he; and I believe he has hung upon our track all the way."

Vaya!" exclaimed another; "I shouldn't much like to be under the range of his rifle; they say he can kill a mile off, and hit wherever he pleases. He shot the snake right through the eyes."

"By the Virgin!" said one of the guerilleros, laughing, 'he must have been a snake of good taste to be caught toying around that dainty daughter of the old Spaniard! It reminds me of what the Book tells about Mother Eva and the old serpent. Now, if the Yankee's bullet——"

We could hear no more, as the voices died away in the distance and under the sound of the water.

"Ay," muttered Lincoln, finishing the sentence; "if the Yankee's bullet hadn't been needed for the varmint, some o' yer wudn't a' been waggin' yer clappers as ye air."

"It *was* you, then?" I asked, turning to the hunter.

"'Twur, cap'n; but for the cussed catawampus, I 'ud 'a gin Mister Dubrosc *his* ticket. I hed a'most sighted him when I seed the flash o' the thing's eye, an' I knowed it wur a-gwine to strike the gal."

"And Jack?" I inquired, now for the first time thinking of the boy.

"I guess he's safe enuf, cap'n. I sent the little feller back with word ter the kurnel."

"Ha! then we may expect them from camp?"

"No doubt on it, cap'n; but yer see, if they kum, they may not be able to foller us beyond the rancho. So it'll be best for us not to depend on them, but ter take Rowl's track."

"You are right. Lead on, Raoul!"

After a painful journey we reached the thicket of which Raoul had spoken; and dragging ourselves into it, we came to a small opening, covered with long dry grass. Upon this luxurious couch we resolved to make a bivouac. We were all worn down by the fatigues of the day and night preceding, and, throwing ourselves upon the grass, in a few minutes were asleep.

Indian Chivalry in Mexico : Her Lord and Master.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A NEW AND TERRIBLE ENEMY.

IT was daylight when I awoke—broad daylight. My companions, all but Clayley, were already astir, and had kindled a fire with a species of wood known to Raoul, that produced hardly any smoke. They were preparing breakfast. On a limb close by hung the hideous, human-like carcass of an iguana, still writhing. Raoul was whetting a knife to skin it, while Lincoln was at some distance, carefully reloading his rifle. The Irishman lay upon the grass, peeling bananas and roasting them over the fire.

The iguana was soon skinned and broiled, and we all of us commenced eating with good appetites.

"Be Saint Pathrick!" said Chane, "this bates frog-atin' all hollow. It's little meself dhramed, on the Owld Sod, hearin' of thim niggers in furrin parts, that I'd be turning kannybawl meself some day!"

"Don't you like it, Murtagh?" asked Raoul jocosely.

"Och! indade, yes; it's betther than an empty brid-basket; but if yez could only taste a small thrifle ov a Wicklow ham this mornin,' an' a smilin' pratie, instid of this brown soap, yez——"

"Hisht!" said Lincoln, starting suddenly, and holding the bite half-way to his mouth.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I'll tell yer in a minit, cap'n."

The hunter waved his hand to injoin silence, and, striding to the edge of the glade, fell flat to the ground. We knew he was listening, and waited for the result. We had not long to wait, for he had scarce brought his ear in contact with the earth when he sprang suddenly up again, exclaiming:

"*Houn's trailin' us, by the Eternal Heavens!*"

It was seldom that Lincoln uttered an oath, and when he did there was something awful in his manner. He wore a despairing look, too, unusual to the bold character of his features. This, with the appalling statement, acted on us like a galvanic shock, and by one impulse we leaped from the fire, and threw ourselves flat upon the grass.

Not a word was spoken as we strained our ears to listen.

At first we could distinguish a low moaning sound, like the hum of a wild bee; it seemed to come out of the earth. After a little it grew louder and sharper; then it ended in a yelp and ceased altogether. After a short interval it began afresh, this time still clearer; then came the yelp, loud, sharp,

and vengeful. There was no mistaking that sound. *It was the bark of the Spanish bloodhound.*

We sprang up simultaneously, looking around for weapons, and then staring at each other with an expression of despair.

The rifle and two case-knives were all the weapons we had.

"What's to be done?" cried one, and all eyes were turned upon Lincoln.

The hunter stood motionless, clutching his rifle and looking to the ground.

"How fur's the crik, Rowl?" he asked after a pause.

"Not two hundred yards; this way it lies."

"I kin see no other chance, cap'n, than ter take the water: we may bamfoozle the houn's a bit, if thar's good wadin'."

"Nor I." I had thought of the same plan.

"If we hed hed bowies, we mouter fit the dogs whar we air, but yer see we hain't; an' I kin tell by thar growl thar ain't less nor a dozen on 'em."

"It's no use to remain here; lead us to the creek, Raoul;" and, following the Frenchman, we dashed recklessly through the thicket.

On reaching the stream we plunged in. It was one of those mountain torrents common in Mexico—spots of still water alternating with cascades, that dash and foam over shapeless masses of amygdaloidal basalt. We waded through the first pool, and then, clambering among the rocks, entered a second. This was a good stretch, a hundred yards or more of still, crystal water, in which we were waist-deep.

We took the bank at the lower, and on the same side, and, striking back into the timber, kept on parallel to the course of the stream. We did not go far away from the water, lest we might be pushed again to repeat the *ruse*.

All this time the yelping of the bloodhounds had been ringing in our ears. Suddenly it ceased.

"They have reached the water," said Clayley.

"No," rejoined Lincoln, stopping a moment to listen: "they're chawin' the bones of the varmint."

"There again! cried one, as their deep voices rang down the glen in the chorus of the whole pack. The next minute the dogs were mute a second time, speaking at intervals in a fierce growl that told us they were at fault.

Beyond an occasional bark we heard nothing of the blood-hounds until we had gained at least two miles down the stream. We began to think we had baffled them in earnest, when Lincoln, who had kept in the rear, was seen to throw himself flat upon the grass. We all stopped, looking at him with breathless anxiety. It was but a minute. Rising up with a reckless air, he struck his rifle fiercely upon the ground, exclaiming:

"Hades swamp them cussed houn's! they're arter us agin!"

By one impulse we all rushed back to the creek, and, scrambling over the rocks, plunged into the water and commenced wading down.

A sudden exclamation burst from Raoul in the advance. We soon learnt the cause, and to our dismay. We had struck the water at a point where the stream cañoned.

On each side rose a frowning precipice, straight as a wall. Between these the black torrent rushed through a channel only a few feet in width so swiftly that, had we attempted to descend by swimming, we should have been dashed to death against the rocks below.

To reach the stream farther down it would be necessary to make a circuit of miles; and the hounds would be on our heels before we could gain three hundred yards.

We looked at each other and at Lincoln, all panting and pale.

"Stumped at last!" cried the hunter, gritting his teeth with fury.

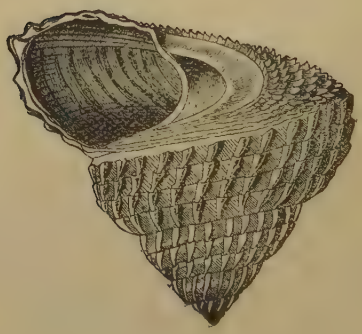
"No!" I shouted, a thought at that moment flashing

upon me. "Follow me, comrades! We'll fight the blood-hounds upon the cliff."

I pointed upward. A yell from Lincoln announced his approval.

"Hooray!" he cried, leaping on the bank; "that idee's jest like yer, cap. Hooray! Now, boys, for the bluff!"

Next moment we were straining up the gorge that led to the precipice; and the next we had reached the highest point, where the cliff, by a bold projection, butted over the stream. There was a level platform covered with tufted grass, and upon this we took our stand.



Indian Weapons.

CHAPTER XLV.

A BATTLE WITH BLOODHOUNDS.

WE stood for some moments gathering breath and nerving ourselves for the desperate struggle. I could not help looking over the precipice. It was a fearful sight. Below, in a vertical line two hundred feet below, the stream rushing through the cañon broke upon a bed of sharp, jagged rocks, and then glided on in seething snow-white foam. There was no object between the eye and the water; no jutting ledge, not even a tree, to break the fall—nothing but the spiky boulders below, and the foaming torrent that washed them.

It was some minutes before our unnatural enemies made their appearance, but every howl sounded nearer and nearer. Our trail was warm, and we knew they were scenting it on a run. At length the bushes crackled, and we could see their white breasts gleaming through the leaves. A few more springs, and the foremost bloodhound bounded out

upon the bank, and, throwing up his broad jaw, uttered a hideous "growl."

He was at fault where we had entered the water. His comrades now dashed out of the thicket, and, joining in a chorus of disappointment, scattered among the stones.

An old dog, scarred and cunning, kept along the bank until he had reached the top of the cañon. This was where we had made our crossing. Here the hound entered the channel, and, springing from rock to rock, reached the point where we had dragged ourselves out of the water. A short yelp announced to his comrades that he had lifted the scent, and they all threw up their noses and came galloping down.

There was a swift current between two large boulders of basalt. We had leaped this. The old dog reached it, and stood straining upon the spring, when Lincoln fired, and the hound, with a short "wough," dropped in upon his head and was carried off like a flash.

"Counts one less to pitch over," said the hunter, hastily reloading his rifle.

Without appearing to notice the strange conduct of their leader, the others crossed in a string, and, striking the warm trail, came yelling up the pass. It was a grassy slope, such as is often seen between two tables of a cliff; and as the dogs strained upward we could see their white fangs and the red blood that had baited them clotted along their jaws. Another crack from Lincoln's rifle, and the foremost hound tumbled back down the gorge.

"Two rubbed out!" cried the hunter, and at the same moment I saw him fling his rifle to the ground.

The hounds kept the trail no longer. Their quarry was before them; their howling ended, and they sprang upon us with the silence of the assassin. The next moment we were mingled together, dogs and men, in the fearful struggle of life and death!

I know not how long this strange encounter lasted. I felt myself grappling with the tawny monsters and hurling them over the cliff. Now they sprang at my throat, and I threw out my arms, thrusting them fearlessly between the shining rows of teeth. Then I was free again, and, seizing a leg, or a tail, or the loose flaps of the neck, I dragged a savage brute towards the brink, and, summoning all my strength, dashed him against its brow, and saw him tumble howling over.

Once I lost my balance and nearly staggered over the precipice, and at length, panting, bleeding, and exhausted, I fell to the earth. I could struggle no longer.

I looked around for my comrades. Clayley and Raoul had sunk upon the grass, and lay torn and bleeding. Lincoln and Chane, holding a hound between them, were balancing him over the bluff.

"Now, Murter," cried the hunter, "giv' him a good heist, and see if we kin pitch him cl'ar on t'other side; hee-woop! —hoo!"

And with this ejaculation the kicking animal was launched into the air. I could not resist looking after. The yellow body bounded from the face of the opposite cliff, and fell with a heavy plash upon the water below.

He was the last of the pack!

Sioux Indians, in Wolf Skins, Hunting Buffalo.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AN INDIAN RUSE.

A WILD shout now drew our attention, and, looking up the creek, we saw our pursuers just debouching from the woods. They were all mounted, and pressing their mustangs down to the bank, where they halted with a strange cry.

"What is that, Raoul? Can you tell the meaning of that cry?"

"They are disappointed, captain. They must dismount and foot it like ourselves; there is no crossing for horses."

"Good. Oh, if we had but a rifle each! This pass——" I looked down the gorge. We could have defended it against the whole party, but we were unarmed.

The guerilleros now dismounted, tying their horses to the trees and preparing to cross over. One, who seemed to be their leader, judging from his brilliant dress and plumes, had already advanced into the stream, and stood upon a

projecting rock with his sword drawn. He was not more than three hundred yards from the position we occupied on the bluff.

"Do you think you can reach him?" I said to Lincoln, who had reloaded his gun, and stood eying the Mexican, apparently calculating the distance.

"I'm feerd, cap'n, he's too fur. I'd guv a half-year's sodger-pay for a crack out o' the major's Dutch gun. We can lose nothin' in tryin'. Murter, will yer stan' afore me? Thar ain't no kiver, an' the feller's watchin'. He'll dodge like a duck if he sees me takin' sight on 'im."

Chane threw his large body in front, and Lincoln, cautiously slipping his rifle over his comrade's shoulder, sighted the Mexican.

The latter had noticed the maneuver, and, perceiving the danger he had thrust himself into, was about turning to leap down from the rock when the rifle cracked—his plumed hat flew off, and, throwing out his arms, he fell with a dead plunge upon the water! The next moment his body was sucked into the current, and, followed by his hat and plumes, was borne down the cañon with the velocity of lightning.

Several of his comrades uttered a cry of terror; and those who had followed him out into the open channel ran back towards the bank, and screened themselves behind the rocks. A voice, louder than the rest, was heard exclaiming:

"*Carajo! guardaos!—esta el rifle del diablo!*" (Look out! it is the devil's rifle!)

It was doubtless the comrade of José, who had been in the skirmish of La Virgen, and had felt the bullet of the *zündnadel.*

The guerilleros, awed by the death of their leader—for it was Yañez who had fallen—crouched behind the rocks. Even those who had remained with the horses, six hundred yards off, sheltered themselves behind trees and projections

of the bank. The party nearest us kept loading and firing their escopettes. Their bullets flattened upon the face of the cliff or whistled over our heads. Clayley, Chane, Raoul, and myself, being unarmed, had thrown ourselves behind the scarp to avoid catching a stray shot. Not so Lincoln, who stood boldly out on the highest point of the bluff, as if disdaining to dodge their bullets.

I never saw a man so completely soaring above the fear of death. There was a sublimity about him that I remember being struck with at the time; and I remember, too, feeling the inferiority of my own courage. It was a stupendous picture, as he stood like a colossus clutching his deadly weapon, and looking over his long brown beard at the skulking and cowardly foe. He stood without a motion—without even winking—although the leaden hail hurtled past his head, and cut the grass at his feet with that peculiar "zip-zip" so well remembered by the soldier who has passed the ordeal of a battle.

There was something in it awfully grand—awful even to us: no wonder that it awed our enemies.

I was about to call upon Lincoln to fall back and shelter himself, when I saw him throw up his rifle to the level. The next instant he dropped the butt to the ground with a gesture of disappointment. A moment after the maneuver was repeated with a similar result, and I could hear the hunter gritting his teeth.

"The cowardly skunks!" mattered he; "they keep a-gwine like a bull's tail in fly-time."

In fact, every time Lincoln brought his piece to a level the guerilleros ducked, until not a head could be seen.

"They ain't as good as thar own dogs," continued the hunter, turning away from the cliff. "If we hed a lot of loose rocks, cap'n, we mout keep them down thar till doomsday."

A movement was now visible among the guerilleros. About one-half of the party were seen to mount their horses and gallop off up the creek.

"They're gone round by the ford," said Raoul: "it's not over a mile and a half. They can cross with their horses there and will be on us in half an hour."

What was to be done? There was no timber to hide us now—no chapparal. The country behind the cliff was a sloping table, with here and there a stunted palm-tree or a bunch of "Spanish bayonet" (*yucca angustifolia*). This would be no shelter, for from the point we occupied, the most elevated on the ridge, we could have descried an object of human size five miles off. At that distance from us the woods began; but could we reach them before our pursuers would overtake us?

Had the guerilleros all gone off by the ford we should have returned to the creek bottom, but a party remained below, and we were cut off from our former hiding-place. We must therefore strike for the woods.

But it was necessary first to decoy the party below, otherwise they would be after us before the others, and experience had taught us that these Mexicans could run like hares.

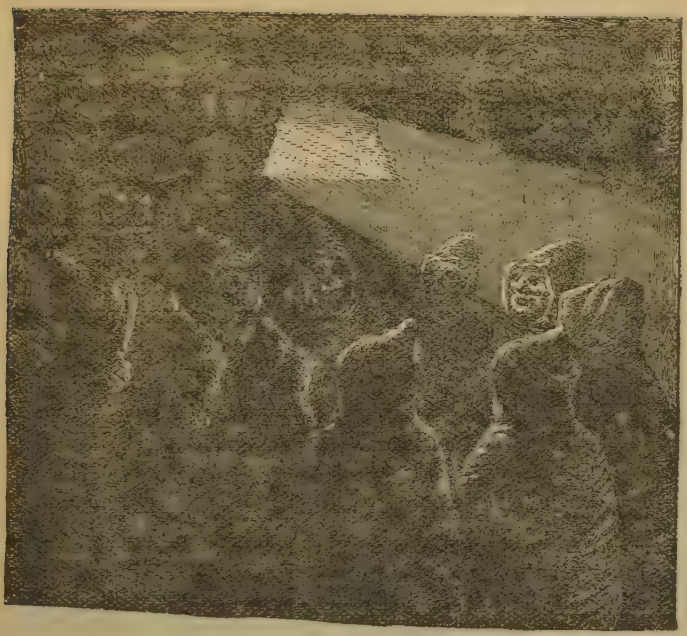
This was accomplished by an old Indian trick that both Lincoln and myself had practised before. It would not have "fooled" a Texan Ranger, but it succeeded handsomely with the guerilleros.

We first threw ourselves on the ground in such a position that only our heads could be seen by the enemy, who still kept blazing away from their escopettes. After a short while our faces gradually sank behind the crest of the ridge, until nothing but our forage caps appeared above the sward. We lay thus for some moments, showing a face or two at intervals. Our time was precious, and we could not perform

the pantomime to perfection ; but we were not dealing with Comanches, and for " Don Diego " it was sufficiently artistical.

Presently we slipped our heads one by one out of their covers, leaving the five caps upon the grass inclining to each other in the most natural positions. We then stole back lizard-fashion, and, after sprawling a hundred yards or so, rose to our feet and ran like scared dogs. We could tell that we had duped the party below, as we heard them firing away at our empty caps long after we had left the scene of our late adventure.

Heathenish Rites Among the Indians.



Group of Ancient Indian Mummies, Once Prominent Citizens, now in Retired Life.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A COUP D'ÉCLAIR.

MANY an uneasy look was thrown over our shoulders as we struggled down that slope. Our strength was urged to its utmost; and this was not much, for we had all lost blood in our encounter with the sleuth-hounds, and felt weak and faint.

We were baffled, too, by a storm—a fierce tropical storm. The rain, thick and heavy, plashed in our faces, and made

the ground slippery under our feet. The lightning flashed in our eyes, and the electric sulphur shortened our breathing. Still we coughed and panted and staggered onward, nerved by the knowledge that death was behind us.

I shall never forget that fearful race. I thought it would never end. I can only liken it to one of those dreams in which we are always making endeavors to escape from some horrible monster, and are as often hindered by a strange and mysterious helplessness. I remember it now as then. I have often repeated that flight in my sleep, and always awoke with a feeling of shuddering horror.

We had got within five hundred yards of the timber. Five hundred yards is not much to a fresh runner; but to us, toiling along at a trot that much more resembled a walk, it seemed an infinity. A small prairie, with a stream beyond, separated us from the edge of the woods,—a smooth sward without a single tree. We had entered upon it—Raoul, who was light of foot, being in the advance, while Lincoln from choice hung in the rear.

An exclamation from the hunter caused us to look back. We were too much fatigued and worn out to be frightened at the sight. Along the crest of the hill a hundred horsemen were dashing after us in full gallop, and the next moment their vengeful screams were ringing in our ears.

"Now, do yer best, boys!" cried Lincoln, "an' I'll stop the cavortin' of that 'ere foremost feller afore he gits much furrer."

We trailed our bodies on, but we could hear the guerilleros fast closing upon us. The bullets from their escopettes whistled in our ears, and cut the grass around our feet. I saw Raoul, who had reached the timber, turn suddenly round and walk back. He had resolved to share our fate.

"Save yourself, Raoul!" I called with my weak voice, but he could not have heard me above the din.

I saw him still walking towards us. I heard the screams behind; I heard the shots, and the whizzing of bullets, and the fierce shouts.

I heard the clatter of hoofs, and the rasping of sabers as they leaped out of their iron sheaths; and among these I heard the crack of Lincoln's rifle, and the wild yell of the hunter. Then a peal of thunder drowned all other sounds: the heavens one moment seemed on fire, then black—black. I felt the stifling smell of sulphur—a hot flash—a quick stroke from some invisible hand—and I sank senseless to the earth!

* * * * * *

Something cool in my throat and over my face brought back the consciousness that I lived. It was water.

I opened my eyes, but it was some moments before I could see that Raoul was bending over me, and laving my temples with water from his boot. I muttered some half-coherent inquiries.

"It was a *coup d'éclair*, captain," said Raoul.

Good heavens! *We had been struck by lightning!* Raoul, being in the advance, had escaped.

The Frenchman soon left me and went to Clayley, who, with Chane and the hunter, lay close by—all three, as I thought, dead. They were pale as corpses, with here and there a spot of purple, or a livid line traced over their skins, while their lips presented the whitish, bloodless hue of death.

"Are they dead?" I asked feebly.

"I think not—we shall see;" and the Frenchman poured some water into Clayley's mouth.

The latter sighed heavily, and appeared to revive.

Raoul passed on to the hunter, who, as soon as he felt the water, started to his feet, and, clutching his comrade fiercely by the throat, exclaimed:

"Yur cussed catamount! yer wud hang me, wud yur?"

Seeing who it was, he stopped suddenly, and looked round with an air of extreme bewilderment. His eye now fell upon the rifle, and, all at once seeming to recollect himself, he staggered towards it and picked it up. Then, as if by instinct, he passed his hand into his pouch and coolly commenced loading.

While Raoul was busy with Clayley and the Irishman, I had risen to my feet and looked back over the prairie. The rain was falling in torrents, and the lightning still flashed at intervals. At the distance of fifty paces a black mass was lying upon the ground motionless—a mass of men and horses, mingled together as they had fallen in their tracks. Here and there a single horse and his rider lay prostrate together. Beyond these, twenty or thirty horsemen were galloping in circles over the plain, and vainly endeavoring to head their frightened steeds towards the point where we were. These, like Raoul, had escaped the stroke.

"Come!" cried the Frenchman, who had now resuscitated Clayley and Chane; "we have not a moment to lose. The mustangs will get over their fright, and these fellows will be down upon us."

His advice was instantly followed, and before the guerilleros could manage their scared horses we had entered the thicket, and were crawling along under the wet leaves.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A BRIDGE OF MONKEYS.

An Araguato.

RAOUL thought that their superstition might prevent the enemy from pursuing us farther. They would consider the lightning as an interference from above—a stroke of the *brezos de Dios*. But we had little confidence in this, and notwithstanding our exhaustion, toiled on through the chapparal. Wearied with over-exertion, half famished—for we had only commenced eating when roused from our repast in the morning—wet to the skin, cut by the bushes, and bitten by the poisoned teeth of the bloodhounds—blinded, and bruised, and bleeding, we were in but poor traveling condition.

Even Lincoln, whose buoyancy had hitherto borne up, appeared cowed and broken. For the first mile or two he seemed vexed at something and "out of sorts," stopping every now and again, and examining his rifle in a kind of bewilderment,

Feeling that he was once more "in the timber," he began to come to himself.

"Thet sort o' an enemy's new ter me," he said, speaking to Raoul. "Dog-gone the thing! it makes the airth look yeller!"

"You'll see better by-and-by," replied his comrade.

"I had need ter Rowl, or I'll butt my brainpan again one of these hyur saplin's. Wagh! I cudn't sight a b'ar, if we were to scare him up jest now."

About five miles farther on we reached a small stream. The storm had abated, but the stream was swollen with the rain, and we could not cross it. We were now a safe distance from our pursuers—at least we thought so—and we resolved to "pitch our camp" upon the bank.

This was a simple operation, and consisted in pitching ourselves to the ground under the shade of a spreading tree.

Raoul, who was a tireless spirit, kindled a fire, and commenced knocking down the nuts of the corozo palm, that hung in clusters over our heads. We dried our wet garments, and Lincoln set about dressing our numerous wounds. In this surgical process our shirts suffered severely; but the skill of the hunter soothed our swelling limbs, and after a frugal dinner upon palm-nuts and pitahayas we stretched ourselves along the greensward, and were soon asleep.

I was in that dreamy state, half sleeping, half waking, when I was roused by a strange noise that sounded like a multitude of voices—the voices of children. Raising my head, I perceived the hunter in an attitude of listening.

"What is it, Bob?" I inquired.

"Dod rot me if I kin tell, cap'n! Hyur, Rowl! what's all this hyur channerin'?"

"It's the *araguatoes*," muttered the Frenchman, half asleep.

"Harry-gwaters! an' what i' the name o' Nick's them? Talk plain lingo, Rowl. What are they?"

"Monkeys, then," replied the latter, waking up, and laughing at his companion.

"Thar's a good grist on 'em, then, I reckin," said Lincoln, throwing himself back unconcernedly.

"They are coming towards the stream. They will most likely cross by the rocks yonder," observed Raoul.

"How?—swim it?" I asked. "It is a torrent there."

"Oh no!" answered the Frenchman; "monkeys would rather go into fire than water. If they cannot leap the stream they'll bridge it."

"Bridge it! and how?"

"Stop a moment, captain; you shall see."

The half-human voices now sounded nearer, and we could perceive that the animals were approaching the spot where we lay. Presently they appeared upon the opposite bank, headed by an old gray-bearded chieftain, and officered like a regiment of soldiers.

They were, as Raoul had stated, the *araguatoes* (*simia ursina*) of the tribe of "*alouattes*," or "*howlers*." They were of that species known as "*monos colorados*" (red monkeys). They were about the size of foxhounds, though there was a difference in this respect between the males and females. Many of the latter were mothers, and carried their human-like infants upon their shoulders as they marched along, or, squatted upon their hams, tenderly caressed them, fondling and pressing them against their *mæmmæ*. Both males and females were of a tawny-red or lion-color; both had long beards, and the hair upon their bodies was coarse and shaggy. Their tails were, each of them, three feet in length; and the absence of hair on the underside of these, with the hard, *callous* appearance of the cuticle, showed that these appendages were extremely prehensible. In fact, this was apparent from the manner in which the young "held

on" to their mothers; for they appeared to retain their difficult seats as much by the grasp of their tails as by their arms and hands.

On reaching the bank of the "arroyo" the whole troop came to a sudden halt. One—an *aide-de-camp*, or chief pioneer, perhaps—ran forward upon a projecting rock; and, after looking across the stream, as if calculating its width, and then carefully examining the trees overhead, he scampered back to the troop, and appeared to communicate with the leader. The latter uttered a cry—evidently a command—which was answered by many individuals in the band, and these instantly made their appearance in front, and, running forward upon the bank of the stream, collected around the trunk of a tall cotton-wood that grew over the narrowest part of the arroyo. After uttering a chorus of discordant cries, twenty or thirty of them were seen to scamper up the trunk of the cotton-wood. On reaching a high point, the foremost—a strong fellow—ran out upon a limb, and, taking several turns of his tail around it, slipped off, and hung head downwards. The next on the limb—also a stout one—climbed down the body of the first, and, whipping his tail tightly around the neck and fore-arm of the latter dropped off in his turn, and hung head down. The third repeated this maneuver upon the second, and the fourth upon the third, and so on, until the last one upon the string rested his fore-paws upon the ground.

The living chain now commenced swinging backwards and forwards, like the pendulum of a clock. The motion was slight at first, but gradually increased, the lowermost monkey striking his hands violently on the earth as he passed the tangent of the oscillating curve. Several others upon the limbs above aided the movement. The absence of branches upon the lower part of the tree, which we have said was a cotton-wood (*populus angulate*), enabled them to execute this movement freely.

The oscillation continued to increase until the monkey at the end of the chain was thrown among the branches of a tree on the opposite bank. Here, after two or three vibrations he clutched a limb and held fast. This movement was executed adroitly, just at the culminating point of the "swing," in order to save the intermediate links from the violence of a too sudden jerk.

The chain was now fast at both ends, forming a complete suspension-bridge, over which the whole troop, to the number of four or five hundred, passed with the rapidity of thought.

It was one of the most comical sights I ever beheld, to witness the quizzical expression of countenances along that living chain. To see the mothers, too, making the passage, with their tiny infants clinging to their backs, was a sight at once comical and curious.

The monkeys that formed the chain kept up an incessant talking, and, as we fancied, *laughing*, and frequently they would bite at the legs of the individuals passing over, as if to hurry them on!

The troop was soon on the other side: but how were the animals forming the bridge to get themselves over? This was the question that suggested itself. Manifestly, thought we, by number one letting go his tail. But then the *point d'appui* on the other side was much lower down, and number one, with half a dozen of his neighbors, would be dashed against the opposite bank, or soused into the water.

Here, then, was a problem, and we waited with some curiosity for its solution.

It was soon solved. A monkey was now seen attaching his tail to the lowest on the bridge: another girdled him in a similar manner, and another, and so on until a dozen more were added to the string. These last were all powerful fellows: and, running up to a high limb, they lifted the bridge into a position almost horizontal.

Then a scream from the last monkey of the new formation warned the *tail end* that all was ready ; and the next moment the whole chain was swung over, and landed safely on the opposite bank !

The lowermost links now dropped off to the ground, while the higher ones leaped to the branches and came down by the trunk. The whole troop then scampered off into the chapparal and disappeared.

" Aw, be the powers of Moll Kelly ! iv thim little crayteurs hasn't more sinse than the humans av these parts - It's a quare counthry, anyhow. Be me sowl ! it bates Banagher intirely ! "

A general laugh followed the Irishman's remarks ; and we all sprang to our feet, refreshed by our sleep, and lighter in spirits.

The storm had disappeared, and the sun, now setting, gleamed in upon us through the broad leaves of the palms. The birds were abroad once more—brilliant creatures—uttering their sweet songs. Parrots, and trogons, and tanagers flashed around our heads ; and the great-billed and silly-looking toucans sat silent in the branches above.

The stream had become fordable, and leaving our " lair," we crossed over, and struck into the woods on the opposite side.

Taking Solid Comfort. Smoking Out the Mosquitos.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE JARACHOS.

E headed towards the National Bridge. Raoul had a friend half-way on the route—an old comrade upon whom he could depend. His rancho was in a secluded spot, near the road that leads to the rinconada of San Martin. We should find refreshment there; and, if not a bed, "at least," said Raoul, "a roof and a petaté" We should not be likely to meet any one, as it was ten miles off, and it would be late when we reached it.

It *was* late—near midnight—when we dropped in upon the contrabandista, for such was the friend of Raoul; but he and his family were still astir, under the light of a very dull wax candle.

José Antonio—that was his name—was a little "sprung" at the five bareheaded apparitions that burst so suddenly upon him; but, recognizing Raoul, we were cordially welcomed.

Our host was a spare, bony old fellow, in leathern jacket and calzoneros, with a keen, shrewd eye, that took in our situation at a single glance, and saved the Frenchman a great deal of explanation. Notwithstanding the cordiality with which his friend received him, I noticed that Raoul seemed uneasy about something as he glanced around the room: for the rancho, a small cane structure, had only one.

There were two women stirring about—the wife of the contrabandista, and his daughter, a plump, good-looking girl of eighteen or thereabout.

"*No han cenado, caballeros!*" (You have not supped, gentlemen?), inquired, or rather affirmed, José Antonio, for our looks had answered the question before it was asked.

"*Ni comino—ni almorzado*" (Nor dined—nor breakfast,) replied Raoul with a grin.

"*Carambo! Rafaela! Jesusita!*" shouted our host, with a sign, such as, among the Mexicans, often conveys a whole chapter of intelligence. The effect was magical. It sent Jesusita (Little Jesus) to her knees before the tortilla-stones; and Rafaela, José's wife, seized a string of tassajo, and plunged it into the olla. Then the little palm-leaf fan was handled, and the charcoal blazed and crackled, and the beef boiled, and the black beans simmered, and the chocolate frothed up, and we all felt happy under the prospect of a savory supper.

I had noticed that, notwithstanding all this, Raoul seemed uneasy. In the corner I discovered the cause of his solicitude, in the shape of a small spare man, wearing the shovel-hat and black *capote* of a priest. I knew that my comrade was not partial to priests, and that he would sooner have trusted Satan himself than one of the tribe; and I at-

tributed his uneasiness to this natural dislike for the clerical fraternity.

"Who is he, Antone?" I heard him whisper to the contrabandista.

"The curé of San Martin," was the reply.

"He is new, then?" said Raoul.

"*Hombre de bien*" (a good man), answered the Mexican, nodding as he spoke.

Raoul seemed satisfied and remained silent.

I could not help noticing the "*hombre de bien*" myself; and no more could I help fancying, after a short observation, that the rancho was indebted for the honor of his presence more to the black eyes of Jesusita than to any zeal on his part regarding the spiritual welfare of the contrabandista or his family.

There was a villainous expression upon his lips as he watched the girl moving over the floor; and once or twice I caught him scowling upon Chane, who, in his usual Irish way, was "blarneying" with Jesusita, and helping her to fan the charcoal.

"Where's the padre?" whispered Raoul to our host.

"He was in the rinconada this morning."

"In the rinconada!" exclaimed the Frenchman, starting.

"They're gone down to the Bridge. The band has had a fandango with your people and lost some men. They say they have killed a good many stragglers along the road."

"So he was in the rinconada, you say? and this morning, too?" inquired Raoul, in a half-soliloquy, and without heeding the last remarks of the contrabandista.

"We've got to look sharp, then," he added, after a pause.

"There's no danger," replied the other, "if you keep from the road. Your people have already reached El Plan, and are preparing to attack the Pass of the Cerro. '*El Cojo*,' they say, has twenty thousand men to defend it."

During this dialogue, which was carried on in whispers,

I had noticed the little padre shifting about uneasily on his seat. At its conclusion he rose up, and, bidding our host "*buenas noches*," was about to withdraw, when Lincoln, who had been quietly eyeing him for some time with that sharp, searching look peculiar to men of his kidney, jumped up, and, placing himself before the door, exclaimed in a drawling, emphatic tone:

"*No, yer don't!*"

"*Qué cosa?*" (What's the matter?), asked the padre indignantly.

"Kay or no kay—cosser or no cosser—yer don't go out o' hyur afore we do. Rowl, ax yur friend for a piece o' twine, will yer?"

The padre appealed to our host, and he in turn appealed to Raoul. The Mexican was in a dilemma. He dared not offend the curé, and on the other hand he did not wish to dictate to his old comrade Raoul. Moreover, the fierce hunter, who stood like a huge giant in the door, had a voice in the matter; and therefore José Antonio had three minds to consult at one time.

"It ain't Bob Linkin id infringe the rules of hospitality," said the hunter; "but this hyur's a peculiar case, an' I don't like the look of that 'ar priest, nohow yer kin fix it."

Raoul, however, sided with the contrabandista, and explained to Lincoln that the padre was the peaceable curé of the neighboring village, and the friend of Don Antonio; and the hunter, seeing that I did not interpose—for at the moment I was in one of those moods of abstraction, and scarcely noticed what was going on—permitted the priest to pass out. I was recalled to myself more by some peculiar expressions which I heard Lincoln muttering after it was over than by the incidents of the scene itself.

The occurrence had rendered us all somewhat uneasy; and we resolved upon swallowing our supper hastily, and, after pushing forward some distance, to sleep in the woods.

The tortillas were by this time ready, and the pretty Jesusita was pouring out the chocolate; so we set to work like men who had appetites.

The supper was soon despatched, but our host had some *puros* in the house—a luxury we had not enjoyed lately; and hating to hurry away from such comfortable quarters, we determined to stay and take a smoke.

We had hardly lit our cigars when Jesusita, who had gone to the door, came hastily back, exclaiming:

"*Papa—papa! hay gente fuera!*" (Papa, there are people outside!)

As we sprang to our feet several shadows appeared through the open walls. Lincoln seized his rifle and ran to the door. The next moment he rushed back, shouting out:

"By thunder! I told you so!" And, dashing his huge body against the back of the rancho, he broke through the cane pickets with a crash.

We were hastening to follow him when the frail structure gave way; and we found ourselves buried, along with our host and his women, under a heavy thatch of saplings and palm-leaves.

We heard the crack of our comrade's rifle without—the scream of a victim—the reports of pistols and escopettes—the yelling of savage men; and then the roof was raised again, and we were pulled out and dragged down among the trees, and tied to their trunks and taunted and goaded, and kicked and cuffed, by the most villainous-looking set of desperadoes it has ever been my misfortune to fall among. They seemed to take delight in abusing us—yelling all the while like so many demons let loose from the prison of "*los infiernos.*"

Our late acquaintance—the curé—was among them; and it was plain that he had brought the party on us. His "reverence" looked high and low for Lincoln; but, to his great mortification, the hunter had escaped.

How the Spanish Civilized America. From an old Spanish Engraving.

CHAPTER L.

PADRE JARAUTA.

WE were not long in learning into whose hands we had fallen; for the name "Jarauta" was on every tongue. *They were the dreaded "Jarochos" of the bandit priest.*

"We're in for it now," said Raoul, deeply mortified at the part he had taken in the affair with the curé. "It's a wonder they have kept us so long. Perhaps *he's* not here himself, and they're waiting for him."

As Raoul said this the clatter of hoofs sounded along the narrow road; and a horseman came galloping up to the rancho, riding over everything and everybody with a perfect recklessness.

The Man-eater. An Exciting Scene in Tropical America.

"That's Jarauta," whispered Raoul. "If he sees *me*—but it don't matter much," he added, in a lower tone: "we'll have a quick shrift all the same: he can't more than *hang*—and that he'll be sure to do."

"Where are these Yankees?" cried Jarauta, leaping out of his saddle.

"Here, captain," answered one of the Jarochos, a hideous-looking griffe, dressed in a scarlet uniform, and apparently the lieutenant of the band.

"How many?"

"Four, captain."

"Very well—what are you waiting for?"

"To know whether I shall *hang* or *shoot* them."

"Shoot them, by all means! *Carambo!* we have no time for neck-stretching!"

"There are some nice trees here, captain," suggested another of the band, with as much coolness as if he had been conversing about the hanging of so many dogs. He wished—a curiosity not uncommon—to witness the spectacle of hanging.

"*Madre de Dios!* stupid! I tell you we haven't time for such silly sport. Out with you there! Sanchez! Gabriel! Carlos! send your bullets through their Saxon skulls! Quick!"

Several of the Jarochos commenced unslinging their carbines, while those who guarded us fell back, to be out of range of the lead.

"Come," exclaimed Raoul, "it can't be worse than this—we can only die; and I'll let the padre know whom he has got before I take leave of him. I'll give him a *souvenir* that won't make him sleep any sounder to-night. *Oyez, Padre Jarauta!*" continued he, calling out in a tone of irony; "have you found Marguerita yet?"

We could see between us and the dim rushlight that the Jarocho started, as if a shot had passed through his heart.

"Hold!" he shouted to the men, who were about taking

aim; "drag those scoundrels hither! A light there!—fire the thatch! *Vaya!*"

In a moment the hut of the contrabandista was in flames, the dry palm-leaves blazing up like flax.

"Merciful Heaven! *they are going to roast us!*"

With this horrible apprehension, we were dragged up towards the burning pile, close to which stood our fierce judge and executioner.

The bamboos blazed and crackled, and under their red glare we could now see our captors with a terrible distinctness. A more demon-like set, I think, could not have been found anywhere out of the infernal regions.

Most of them were zamboes and mestizoes, and not a few pure Africans of the blackest hue, maroons from Cuba and the Antilles, many of them with their fronts and cheeks tattooed, adding to the natural ferocity of their features. Their coarse woolly hair sticking out in matted tufts, their white teeth set in savage grins, their strange armor and grotesque attitudes, their wild and picturesque attire, formed a *coup d'œil* that might have pleased a painter in his studio, but which at the time had no charm for us.

There were Pintoes among them, too—spotted men from the tangled forests of Acapulco—pied and speckled with blotches of red, and black, and white, like hounds and horses. They were the first of this race I had ever seen, and their unnatural complexions, even at that fearful moment, impressed me with feelings of disgust and loathing.

A single glance at this motley crew would have convinced us, had we not been quite sure of it already, that we had no favor to expect. There was not a countenance among them that exhibited the slightest trait of grace or mercy. No such expression could be seen around us, and we felt satisfied that our time had come.

The appearance of their leader did not shake this conviction. Revenge and hatred were playing upon his sharp

sallow features, and his thin lips quivered with an expression of malice, plainly habitual. His nose, like a parrot's beak, had been broken by a blow, which added to its sinister shape; and his small black eyes twinkled with metallic brightness.

He wore a purplish-colored manga, that covered his whole body, and his feet were cased in the red leather boots of the country, with heavy silver spurs strapped over them. A black sombrero, with its band of gold bullion and tags of the same material, completed the *tout ensemble* of his costume. He wore neither beard nor mustache; but his hair, black and snaky, hung down trailing over the velvet embroidery of his manga.

Such was the Padre Jarauta.

Raoul's face was before him, upon which he looked for some moments without speaking. His features twitched as if under galvanic action, and we could see that his fingers jerked in a similar manner.

They were painful memories that could produce this effect upon a heart of such iron devilry, and Raoul alone knew them. The latter seemed to enjoy the interlude; for he lay upon the ground, looking up at the Jarocho with a smile of triumph upon his reckless features.

We were expecting the next speech of the padre to be an order for flinging us into the fire, which now burned fiercely. Fortunately, this fancy did not seem to strike him just then.

"Ha, monsieur!" exclaimed he at length, approaching Raoul. "I dreamt that you and I would meet again; I dreamt it—ha! ha! ha!—it was a pleasant dream, but not half so pleasant as the reality—ha! ha! ha! Don't *you* think so?" he added, striking our comrade over the face with a mule quirt. "Don't *you* think so?" he repeated, lashing him as before, while his eyes sparkled with a fiendish malignity.

"Did *you* dream of meeting Marguerita again?" inquired Raoul, with a satirical laugh, that sounded strange, even fearful, under the circumstances.

I shall never forget the expression of the Jarocho at that moment. His sallow face turned black, his lips white, his eyes burned like a demon's, and, springing forward with a fierce oath, he planted his iron-shod heel upon the face of our comrade. The skin peeled off, and the blood followed.

There was something so cowardly—so redolent of a brutal ferocity—in the act, that I could not remain quiet. With a desperate wrench I freed my hands, skinning my wrists in the effort, and, flinging myself upon him, I clutched at the monster's throat.

He stepped back; my ankles were tied, and I fell upon my face at his feet.

"Ho! ho!" cried he, "what have we here? An officer, eh? Come!" he continued, "rise up from your prayers and let me look at you. Ha! a captain? And this?—a lieutenant! Gentlemen, you're too dainty to be shot like common dogs; we'll not let the wolves have you; we'll put you out of their reach; ha! ha! ha! Out of reach of wolves, do you hear? And what's this? continued he, turning to Chane and examining his shoulders. "Bah! *soldado raso—Irlándes, carajo!*" (A common soldier—an Irishman, too!) "What do *you* do fighting among these heretics against your own religion? There, renegade!" and he kicked the Irishman in the ribs.

"Thank yer honner!" said Chane, with a grunt, "small fayvors thankfully received; much good may it do yer honner?"

"Here, Lopez!" shouted the brigand.

"Now for the fire!" thought we.

"Lopez, I say!" continued he, calling louder.

"*Aca, aca!*" answered a voice, and the griffe who had guarded us came up, swinging his scarlet manga.

"Lopez, these I perceive are gentlemen of rank, and we must usher them into Hades a little more gracefully, do you hear?"

"Yes, captain," answered the other, with stoical composure.

"Over the cliffs, Lopez. *Facilis descensus Averni*—but you don't understand Latin, Lopez. Over the cliffs, do you hear? You understand that?"

"Yes, captain," repeated the Jarocho, moving only his lips.

"You will have them at the Eagle's Cave by six in the morning; by six, do you hear?"

"Yes, captain," again replied the subordinate.

"And if any of them is missing—is missing, do you hear?"

"Yes, captain."

"You will take his place in the dance—the dance—ha! ha! ha! You understand that, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

"Enough then, good Lopez—handsome Lopez! beautiful Lopez!—enough, and good-night to you!"

So saying, the Jarocho drew his quirt several times across the red cheek of Raoul, and with a curse upon his lips he leaped upon his mustang and galloped off.

Whatever might be the nature of the punishment that awaited us at the Eagle's Cave, it was evident that Lopez had no intention of becoming proxy in it for any of us. This was plain from the manner in which he set about securing us. We were first gagged with bayonet-shanks and then dragged out into the bushes.

Here we were thrown upon our backs, each of us in the center of four trees that formed a parallelogram. Our arms and legs were stretched to their full extent, and tied severally to the trees; and thus we lay, spread out like raw hides to dry. Our savage captors drew the cords so taut that our joints cracked under the cruel tension. In this painful position, with a Jarocho standing over each of us, we passed the remainder of the night.

CHAPTER LI.

A HANG BY THE HEELS.

IT was a long night—the longest I can remember—a night that fully illustrated the horror of monotony. I can compare our feelings to those of one under the influence of the nightmare. But, no—worse than that. Our savage sentries occasionally sat down upon our bodies, and, lighting their cigarritos, chatted gaily while we groaned. We could not protest; we were gagged. But it would have made little difference; they would only have mocked us the more.

We lay glaring upon the moon as she coursed through a

cloudy heaven. The wind whistled through the leaves, and its melancholy moaning sounded like our death-dirge. Several times through the night I heard the howl of the prairie wolf, and I knew it was Lincoln; but the Jarochos had pickets all around, and the hunter dared not approach our position. He could not have helped us.

The morning broke at last; and we were taken up, tied upon the backs of vicious mules, and hurried off through the woods. We traveled for some distance along a ridge, until we had reached its highest point, where the cliff beetled over. Here we were unpacked and thrown upon the grass. About thirty of the Jarochos guarded us, and we now saw them under the broad light of day; but they did not look a whit more beautiful than they had appeared under the glare of the blazing rancho on the preceding night.

Lopez was at their head, and never relaxed his vigilance for a moment. It was plain that he considered the padre a man of his word.

After we had remained about half an hour on the brow of the cliff, an exclamation from one of the men drew our attention; and, looking round, we perceived a band of horsemen straggling up the hill at a slow gallop. It was Jarauta, with about fifty of his followers. They were soon close up to us.

"*Buenos dias, caballeros!*" cried their leader, in a mocking tone, leaping down and approaching us. "I hope you passed the night comfortably. Lopez, I am sure, provided you with good beds. Didn't you, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain," answered the laconic Lopez.

"The gentlemen rested well; didn't they, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

"No kicking or tumbling about, eh?"

"No, captain."

"Oh! then they rested well; it's a good thing: they have a long journey before them—haven't they, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

"I hope, gentlemen, you are ready for the road. Do you think you are ready?"

As each of us had the shank of a bayonet between his teeth, besides being tied neck and heels, it is not likely that this interrogatory received a reply; nor did his "reverence" expect any, as he continued putting similar questions in quick succession, appealing occasionally to his lieutenant for an answer. The latter, who was of the taciturn school, contented himself, and his superior too, with a simple "yes" or "no."

Up to this moment we had no knowledge of the fate that awaited us. We knew we had to die—that we knew; but in what way we were still ignorant. I, for one, had made up my mind that the padre intended pitching us over the cliffs.

We were at length enlightened upon this important point. We were not to take that awful leap into eternity which I had been picturing to myself. A fate more horrible still awaited us. *We were to be hanged over the precipice!*

As if to aid the monster in his inhuman design, several pine-trees grew out horizontally from the edge of the cliff; and over the branches of these the Jarochos commenced reeving their long lazos. Expert in the handling of ropes, as all Mexicans are, they were not long in completing their preparations, and we soon beheld our gallows.

"According to rank, Lopez," cried Jarauta, seeing that all was ready: "the captain first—do you hear?"

"Yes, captain," answered the imperturbable brigand who superintended the operations.

"I shall keep *you* to the last, monsieur," said the priest, addressing Raoul: "you will have the pleasure of bringing up the rear in your passage through purgatory. Ha! ha! ha! Won't he, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

"Maybe some of you would like a priest, gentlemen." This Jarauta uttered with an ironical grin that was revolting to behold. "If you would," he continued, "say so. I sometimes officiate in that capacity myself. Don't I, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

A diabolical laugh burst from the Jarochos, who had dis-

A Mexican Lasso Braided with Strands of Rawhide.

mounted, and were standing out upon the cliff, the better to witness the spectacle of our hanging.

"Well, Lopez, does any of them say 'yes'?"

"No, captain."

"Ask the Irishman there; ask him—he ought to be a good Catholic."

The question was put to Chane, in mockery, of course, for it was impossible for him to answer it; and yet he *did*

answer it, for his look spoke a curse as plainly as if it had been uttered through a trumpet. The Jarochos did not heed that, but only laughed the louder.

"Well, Lopez, what says St. Patrick? 'Yes' or 'no'?"

"'No,' captain."

And a fresh peal of ruffian laughter rang out.

The rope was now placed around my neck in a running noose. The other end had been passed over the tree, and lay coiled near the edge of the cliff. Lopez held it in his hand a short distance above the coil, in order to direct its movements.

"All ready there, Lopez?" cried the leader.

"Yes, captain."

"Swing off the captain, then—no, not yet; let him look at the floor on which he is going to dance; that is but fair."

I had been drawn forward until my feet projected over the edge of the precipice, and close to the root of the tree. I was now forced into a sitting posture, so that I might look below, my limbs hanging over. Strange to say, I could not resist doing exactly what my tormentor wished. Under other circumstances the sight would have been to me appalling; but my nerves were strung by the protracted agony I had been forced to endure.

The precipice on whose verge I sat formed a side of one of those yawning gulfs common in Spanish America, and known by the name *barrancas*. It seemed as if a mountain had been scooped out and carried away. Not two hundred yards horizontally distant was the twin jaw of the chasm, like a black burnt wall; yet the torrent that roared and foamed between them was full six hundred feet below my position! I could have flung the stump of a cigar upon the water; in fact, an object dropping vertically from where I sat—for it was a projecting point—must have fallen plumb into the stream.

It was not unlike the cañon where we had tossed over the dogs; but it was higher, and altogether more hell-like and horrible.

As I looked down, several small birds, whose species I did not stay to distinguish, were screaming below, and an eagle on his broad, bold wing came soaring over the abyss, and flapped up to my very face.

"Well, captain," broke in the sharp voice of Jarauta, "what do you think of it? A nice soft floor to dance upon, isn't it, Lopez!"

"Yes, captain."

"All ready there? Stop! some music; we must have music: how can he dance without music? *Hola*, Sanchez, where's your bugle?"

"Here, captain!"

"Strike up, then! Play 'Yankee Doodle.' Ha! ha! ha! 'Yankee Doodle,' do you hear?"

"Yes, captain," answered the man; and the next moment the well-known strains of the American national air sounded upon my ear, producing a strange, sad feeling I shall never forget.

"Now, Lopez!" cried the padre.

I was expecting to be swung out, when I heard him again shout, "Stay!" at the same time stopping the music.

"By heavens! Lopez, I have a better plan," he cried: why did I not think of it before? It's not too late yet. Ha! ha! ha! *Carambo!* They shall dance upon their heads! That's better—isn't it, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

A cheer from the Jarochos announced their approval of this change in the program.

The padre made a sign to Lopez, who approached him, appearing to receive some directions.

I did not at first comprehend the novelty that was about to be introduced. I was not kept long in ignorance. One

of the Jarochos, seizing me by the collar, dragged me back from the ledge, and transferred the noose from my neck to my ankles. Horror heaped upon horror! I was to be *hung head downwards!*

"That will be much prettier—won't it, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

"The gentleman will have time to make himself ready for heaven before he dies—won't he, Lopez?"

"Yes captain."

"Take out the gag—let him have his tongue free; he'll need that to pray with—won't he, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

One of the Jarochos jerked the bayonet roughly from my mouth, almost dislocating my jaw. The power of speech was gone. I could not, if I had wished it, have uttered an intelligible word.

"Give him his hands, too; he'll need them to keep off the zopilotés; won't he, Lopez?"

"Yes, captain."

The thong that bound my wrists was cut, leaving my hands free. I was on my back, my feet towards the precipice. A little to my right stood Lopez, holding the rope that was about to launch me into eternity.

"Now the music—take the music for your cue, Lopez; then jerk him up!" cried the sharp voice of the fiend.

I shut my eyes, waiting for the pull. It was but a moment, but it seemed a lifetime. There was a dead silence—a stillness like that which precedes the bursting of a rock or the firing of a jubilee-gun. Then I heard the first note of the bugle, and along with it a crack—the crack of a rifle; a man staggered over me, besprinkling my face with blood, and, falling forward, disappeared!

Then came the pluck upon my ankles, and I was jerked head downwards into the empty air. I felt my feet touching the branches above, and, throwing up my arms, I

grasped one, and swung my body upwards. After two or three efforts I lay along the main trunk, which I embraced with the hug of despair. I looked downward. A man was hanging below—far below—at the end of the lazo! It was Lopez. I knew his scarlet manga at a glance. He was hanging by the thigh in a snarl of the rope.

His hat had fallen off. I could see the red blood running over his face and dripping from his long, snaky locks. He hung head down. I could see that he was dead!

The hard thong was cutting my ankles, and—oh, heaven! —under our united weight the roots were cracking!

Appalling thought! "*The tree will give way!*"

I held fast with one arm. I drew forth my knife—fortunately I still had one—with the other. I opened the blade with my teeth, and, stretching backward and downward, I drew it across the thong. It parted with a "snig," and the red object left me like a flash of light. There was a plunge upon the black water below—a plunge and a few white bubbles; but the body of the Jarocho, with its scarlet trappings, was seen no more after that plunge.

CHAPTER LII.

A VERY SHORT TRIAL.

Vulture or Mexican Zopilote.

DURING all this time shots were ringing over me. I could hear the shouts and cheering of men, the trampling of heavy hoofs, and the clashing of sabers. I knew that some strange deliverance had reached us. I knew that a skirmish was going on above me, but I could see nothing. I was below the level of the cliff.

I lay in a terrible suspense, listening. I dared not change my posture—I dared not move. The weight of the Jarocho's body had hitherto held my feet securely in the notch; but that was gone, and my ankles were still tied. A movement and my legs might fall off the limb and drag me downward. I was faint, too, from the protracted struggle for life and death, and I hugged the tree and held on like a wounded squirrel.

The shots seemed less frequent, the shouts appeared to

recede from the cliffs. Then I heard a cheer—an Anglo-Saxon cheer—an American cheer, and the next moment a well-known voice rang in my ears.

"By the livin' catamount, he's hyur yit! Whooray—whoop! Niver say die! Hold on, cap'n, teeth an' toenail! Hyur, boys! clutch on, a lot o' yer! Quick!—hook my claws, Nat! Now pull—all thegether!—Hooray!"

I felt a strong hand grasping the collar of my coat, and the next moment I was raised from my perch and landed upon the top of the cliff.

I looked around upon my deliverers. Lincoln was dancing like a lunatic, uttering his wild, half-Indian yells. A dozen men, in the dark-green uniform of the "mounted rifles," stood looking on and laughing at this grotesque exhibition. Close by another party were guarding some prisoners, while a hundred others were seen in scattered groups along the ridge, returning from the pursuit of the Jarochos, whom they had completely routed.

I recognized Twing, and Hennessy, and Hillis, and several other officers whom I had met before. We were soon *en rapport*, and I could not have received a greater variety of congratulations had it been the hour after my wedding.

Little Jack was the guide of the rescue.

After a moment spent in explanation with the major, I turned to look for Lincoln. He was standing close by, holding in his hands a piece of lazo, which he appeared to examine with a strange and puzzled expression. He had recovered from his burst of wild joy and was "himself again."

"What's the matter, Bob?" I inquired, noticing his bewildered look.

"Why, cap'n, I'm a sorter bamfoozled yeer. I kin understan' well enuf how the feller jirked yer into the tree afore he let go. But how did this hyur whang kum cut? An' whar's the other eend?

I saw that he held in his hand the noose of the lazo

which he had taken from my ankles, and I explained the mystery of how it had "kum cut." This seemed to raise me still higher in the hunter's esteem. Turning to one of the riflemen, an old hunter like himself, he whispered—I overheard him:

"I'll tell yer what it is, Nat: he kin whip his weight in wild-cats or grizzly b'ars any day in the year—*he* kin, or my name ain't Bob Linkin."

Saying this, he stepped forward on the cliff and looked over; and then he examined the tree, and then the piece of lazo, and then the tree again, and then he commenced dropping pebbles down, as if he was determined to measure every object, and fix it in his memory with a proper distinctness.

Twing and the others had now dismounted. As I turned towards them Clayley was taking a pull at the major's pewter—and a good long pull, too. I followed the lieutenant's example, and felt the better for it.

"But how did you find us, major?"

"This little soldier," said he, pointing to Jack, "brought us to the rancho where you were taken. From there we easily tracked you to a large hacienda."

"Ha! you routed the guerilla, then?

"Routed the guerilla! We saw no guerilla."

"What! at the hacienda?"

"Peons and women; nothing more. Yes, there was, too—what am I thinking about? There was a party there that routed *us!* Thornley and Hillis here have both been wounded, and are not likely to recover—poor fellows!"

I looked towards these gentlemen for an explanation. They were both laughing, and I looked in vain.

"Hennessy, too," said the major, "has got a stab under the ribs."

"Och, by my soul have I, and no mistake!" cried the latter.

"Come, major—an explanation, if you please."

I was in no humor to enjoy this joke. I half divined the cause of their mirth, and it produced in me an unaccountable feeling of annoyance, not to say pain.

"Be my faith, then, captain," said Hennessy, speaking for the major, "If ye must know all about it, I'll tell ye myself. We overhauled a pair of the most elegant crayteurs you ever clapp'd eyes upon; and rich—rich as Craysus—wasn't they, boys?"

"Oh! plenty of tin," remarked Hillis.

"But, captain," continued Hennessy, "how they took on to your 'tiger!' I thought they would have eaten the little chap, body, bones, and all."

I was chafing with impatience to know more, but I saw that nothing worth knowing could be had in that quarter. I determined, therefore, to conceal my anxiety, and find an early opportunity to talk to Jack.

"But beyond the hacienda?" I inquired, changing the subject.

"We trailed you down stream to the cañon, where we found blood upon the rocks. Here we were at fault, when a handsome, delicate-looking lad, known somehow or other to your Jack, came up and carried us to the crossing above, where the lad gave us the slip, and we saw no more of him. We struck the hoofs again where he left us, and followed them to a small prairie on the edge of the woods, where the ground was strangely broken and trampled. There they had turned back, and we lost all trace."

"But how, then, did you come here?"

"By accident altogether. We were striking to the nearest point on the National Road when that tall sergeant of yours dropped down upon us out of the branches of a tree."

"Whom did you see, Jack?" I whispered to the boy, after having drawn him aside.

"I saw them all, captain."

"Well?"

"They asked me where you were, and when I told them——"

"Well—well?"

"They appeared to wonder——"

"Well?"

"And the young ladies——"

"And the young ladies?"

"They ran round, and cried, and——"

Jack was the dove that brought the olive-branch.

"Did they say where they were going?" I inquired, after one of those sweet waking dreams.

"Yes, captain; they are going up the country to live.

"Where?—where?"

"I could not recollect the name—it was so strange."

"Jalapa? Orizava? Cordova? Puebla? Mexico?"

"I think it was one of them, but I cannot tell which. I have forgotten it, captain."

"Captain Haller!" called the voice of the major; "here a moment, if you please. These are some of the men who were going to hang you, are they not?"

Twing pointed to five of the Jarochos who had been captured in the skirmish.

"Yes," replied I, "I think so; yet I could not swear to their identity."

"By the crass, major, I can swear to ivery mother's son av thim! There isn't a scoundhrel among thim but has given me rayzon to remimber him, iv a harty kick in the ribs might be called a rayzon. O—h! ye ugly spalpeens! kick me now, will yez?—will yez jist be plazed to trid upon the tail av my jacket?"

"Stand out here, my man," said the major.

Chane stepped forward, and swore away the lives of the five Jarochos in less than as many minutes.

"Enough!" said the major, after the Irishman had given his testimony. "Lieutenant Claiborne," continued

he, addressing an officer the youngest in rank, "what sentence?"

"Hang!" replied the latter in a solemn voice.

"Lieutenant Hillis?"

"Hang!" was the reply.

"Lieutenant Clayley?"

"Hang!" said Clayley in a quick and emphatic tone.

"Captain Hennessy?"

"Hang them!" answered the Irishman.

"Captain Haller?"

"Have you determined, Major Twing?" I asked, intending, if possible, to mitigate this terrible sentence.

"We have no time, Captain Haller," replied my superior, interrupting me, "nor opportunity to carry prisoners. Our army has reached Plan del Rio, and is preparing to attack the pass. An hour lost, and we may be too late for the battle. You know the result of that as well as I."

I knew Twing's determined character too well to offer further opposition, and the Jarochos were condemned to be hung.

The following extract from the major's report of the affair will show how the sentence was carried out:

"We killed five of them and captured as many more, but the leader escaped. The prisoners were tried, and sentenced to be hung. They had a gallows already rigged for Captain Haller and his companions, and for want of a better we hanged them upon that."

Indian Earthenware and Ornaments.

CHAPTER LIII.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF A BATTLE

IT was still only an hour by sun as we rode off from the Eagle's Cave. At some distance I turned in my saddle and looked back. It was a singular sight, those five hanging corpses, and one not easily forgotten. What an appalling picture it must have been to their own comrades, who doubtless watched the spectacle from some distant elevation!

Motionless they hung, in all the picturesque drapery of their strange attire—draggling—dead! The pines bent slightly over, the eagle screamed as he swept past, and high in the blue air a thousand bald vultures wheeled and circled, descending at every curve.

Before we had ridden out of sight the Eagle's Cliff was

black with zopilotés, hundreds clustering upon the pines, and whetting their fetid beaks over their prey, still warm. I could not help being struck with this strange transposition of victims.

We forded the stream below, and traveled for some hours in a westerly course, over a half-naked ridge. At midday we reached an arroyo—a clear, cool stream that gurgled along under a thick grove of the *palma redonda*. Here we "nooned," stretching our bodies along the greensward.

At sundown we rode into the *pueblito* of Jacomulco, where we had determined to pass the night. Twing levied on the *alcalde* for forage for "man and beast." The horses were picketed in the plaza, while the men bivouacked by their fires—strong mounted pickets having been thrown out on the roads or tracks that led to the village.

By daybreak we were again in our saddles, and riding across another ridge, we struck the Plan River five miles above the bridge, and commenced riding down the stream. We were still far from the water, which roared and "soughed" in the bottom of a barranca, hundreds of feet below our path.

On crossing an eminence a sight suddenly burst upon us that caused us to leap up in our saddles. Directly before us, and not a mile distant, rose a high round hill like a semi-globe, and from a small tower upon its top waved the standard of Mexico.

Long lines of uniformed men girdled the tower, formed in rank. Horsemen in bright dresses galloped up and down the hill. We could see the glitter of brazen helmets, and the glancing of a thousand bayonets. The burnished howitzer flashed in the sunbeams, and we could discern the cannoniers standing by their posts. Bugles were braying and drums rolling. So near were they that we could distinguish the the call. *They were sounding the "long roll"*!

"Halt! Great heaven!" cried Twing, jerking his horse

upon its haunches ; "we are riding into the enemy's camp! Guide!" he added, turning fiercely to Raoul, and half drawing his sword, "what's this?"

"The hill, major, replied the soldier coolly, "is 'El Telegrafo.' It is the Mexican headquarters, I take it."

"And, sir, what mean you? It is not a mile distant!"

"It is ten miles, major."

"Ten! Why, sir, I can trace the eagle upon that flag! It is not one mile, by Heaven!"

"By the eye, true; but by the road, major, it is what I have said—ten miles. We passed the crossing of the barranca some time ago; there is no other before we reach El Plan."

It was true. Although within range of the enemy's lightest metal, we were ten miles off!

A vast chasm yawned between us and them. The next moment we were upon its brink, and, wheeling sharply to the right, we trotted on as fast as the rocky road would allow us.

"O heavens! Haller, we shall be too late. Gallop!" shouted Twing, as we pressed our horses side by side.

The troop at the word sprang into a gallop. El Plan, the bridge, the hamlet, the American camp with its thousand white pyramids, all burst upon us like a flash—below, far below, lying like a map. We are still opposite El Telegrafo!

"By heavens!" cried Twing, "our camp is empty!"

A few figures only vere visible, straggling among the tents; the teamster, the camp-guard, the invalid soldier.

"Look! look!"

I followed the direction indicated. Against the long ridge that rose over the camp a dark-blue line could be traced—a line of uniformed men, glistening as they moved with the sparkle of ten thousand bayonets. It wound along the hill like a bristling snake, and, heading towards El Telegrafo, disappeared for a moment behind the ridge.

A gun from the globe-shaped hill—and then another! another! another!—a roll of musketry!—drums—bugles—shouts—cheering!

"The battle's begun!"

"We are too late!"

We were still eight miles from the scene of action. We checked up, and sat chafing in our saddles.

And now the roll of musketry became incessant, and we could hear the crack! crack! of the American rifles. And bombs hurtled and rockets hissed through the air.

The round hill was shrouded in a cloud of sulphur, and through the smoke we could see small parties creeping up from rock to rock, from bush to bush, firing as they went. We could see some tumbling back under the leaden hail that was poured upon them from above.

And then a strong band debouched from the woods below, and strained upward, daring all danger. Up, up!—and bayonets were crossed, and sabers glistened and grew red, and wild cries filled the air. And then came a cheer, long, loud, and exulting, and under the thinning smoke thousands were seen rushing down the steep, and flinging themselves into the woods.

We knew not as yet which party it was that were thus flying. We looked at the tower in breathless suspense. The cloud was around its base, where musketry was still rolling, sending its deadly missiles after the fugitives below.

"Look! look!" cried a voice; "the Mexican flag—it is down! *See! 'the star-spangled banner!'*"

The American standard was slowly unfolding itself over the blue smoke, and we could easily distinguish the stripes, and the dark square in the corner with its silvery stars; and, as if with one voice, our troops broke into a wild "Hurrah!"

In less time than you have taken in reading this account of it the battle of Cerro Gordo was lost and won.

Mexican Indians Playing with Shuttlecock.

CHAPTER LIV.

AN ODD WAY OF ESCAPING FROM A BATTLE-FIELD.

WE sat on our horses, facing the globe-shaped summit of El Telegrafo, and watching our flag as it swung out from the tower.

"Look yonder! what is that?" cried an officer, pointing across the barranca.

All eyes were now turned in the direction indicated. A white line was slowly moving down the face of the opposite cliff.

"Rein back, men! rein back!" shouted Twing, as his eye rested upon the strange object. "Throw yourselves under cover of the hill!"

In a minute our whole party—dragoons, officers, and all—had galloped our horses into the bed of a dry arroyo, where we were completely screened from observation. Three or four of us, dismounting, along with Twing, crept cautiously forward to the position we had just left, and, raising our heads over the bunch-grass, looked across the chasm. We were close to its edge, and the opposite "cheek" of the barranca, a huge wall of trap-rock, about a mile horizontally distant, rose at least a thousand feet from the river bottom. Its face was almost perpendicular, with the exception of a few stairs or platforms in the basaltic strata, and from these hung out stunted palms, cedars, and dark, shapeless masses of cacti and agave.

Down this front the living line was still moving—slowly, zigzag—along narrow ledges and over jutting points, as though some white liquid or a train of gigantic insects were crawling down the precipice. The occasional flash of a bright object would have told us the nature of this strange phenomenon, had we not guessed it already. They were armed men—Mexicans—escaping from the field of battle; and in a wood upon the escarpment of the cliff we could perceive several thousands of their comrades huddled up, and waiting for an opportunity to descend. They were evidently concealed, and out of all danger from their pursuers on the other side. Indeed, the main body of the American army had already passed their position, and were moving along the Jalapa road, following up the clouds of dust that hung upon the retreating squadrons of Santa Anna.

We lay for some time observing the motions of these cunning fugitives as they streamed downward. The head of their line had nearly reached the timbered bottom, through whose green fringes the Plan River swept onward, curving from cliff to cliff.

Impatient looks were cast towards the major, whose cold gray eye showed no signs of action.

"Well, major—what's to be done?" asked one.

"Nothing," was the impressive reply.

"Nothing!" echoed every one.

"Why, what could we do?"

"Take them prisoners—every one of them."

"Whom prisoners?"

"These Mexicans—these before us."

"Ha! before you they are—a long way, too. Bah! they are ten miles off, and, even if we could ride straight down the bluff with winged horses, what could our hundred men do in that jungle below? Look yonder!—there are a thousand of them crawling over the rocks!"

"And what signify numbers?" asked I, now speaking for the first time. "They are already defeated and flying—half of them, I'll wager, without arms. Come, major, let us go! We can capture the whole party without firing a shot."

"But, my dear captain, we cannot reach them where they are."

"It is not necessary. If we ride up the cliffs, they will come to us."

"How?"

"You see this dark line. It is not three miles distant. You know that timber like that does not grow on the naked face of a cliff. It is a gorge, and, I'll warrant, a watercourse too. They will pass through it.

"Beautiful! We could meet them as they came up it," cried several at once.

"No, lads!—no! You are all wrong. They will keep the bottom—the heavy timber, I warrant you. It's no use losing time. We must round to the road, and forward. Who knows that we may not find work enough yet? Come!"

So saying, our commanding-officer rose up, and, walking back, to the arroyo, leaped into his saddle. Of course we followed his example, but with no very amiable feelings. I,

for one, felt satisfied that we might have made a dashing thing of it, and entered the camp with flying colors. I felt, and so did my friend Clayley, like a schoolboy who had come too late for his lesson, and would gladly have been the bearer of a present to his master: moreover, we had learned from our comrades that it was the expressed intention of the commander-in-chief to capture as many of the enemy as possible on this occasion. This determination arose from the fact, well authenticated, that hundreds who had marched out of Vera Cruz on parole had gone direct to Cerro Gordo, with the intention of fighting us again; and no doubt some of these honorable soldiers were among the gentry now climbing down the barranca.

With these feelings, Clayley and I were anxious to do something that might cover our late folly, and win our way back to favor at headquarters.

"Let me take fifty of your men and try this. You know, Major Twing, I have a score to rub out."

"I cannot, captain—I cannot. We must on. Forward!"

And the next moment we were moving at a trot in the direction of El Plan.

For the first time I felt angry at Twing; and, drawing my bridle tighter, I fell back to the rear. What would I not have given for the "Rifle Rangers" at that moment?

I was startled from a very sullen reverie by a shot, the whistling of a rifle bullet, and the loud "Halt!" of the major in front. Raising myself on the instant, I could see a greenish-looking object just disappearing over the spur of a ridge. It was a vidette, who had fired and run in.

"Do you think they are any of our people?"

"That 'ar's one of our kump'ny, cap'n; I seed the green on his cap," said Lincoln.

I galloped to the front. Twing was just detaching a small party to reconnoiter. I fell in along with this, and after

riding a hundred yards we looked over the ridge, and saw, not four hundred yards distant, a ten-inch howitzer, that had just been wheeled round, and now stood gaping at us. In rear of the gun stood a body of artillerists, and on their flanks a larger body of what appeared to be light infantry or rifles. It would have been anything but a pleasing sight, but that a small flag with red and white stripes was playing over the gun; and our party, heedless of their orders, leaped their horses on the ridge and, pulling off their caps, saluted it with a cheer.

The soldiers by the battery still stood undecided, not knowing what to make of our conduct, as they were the advanced outpost in this direction, when a mounted rifleman galloped up and displayed the flag of his regiment.

A wild cheer echoed back from the battery; and the next moment both parties had met, and were shaking each other's hands with the hearty greetings of long-parted friends.

Not the least interesting to me was the fact that my own corps, under the command of its lieutenant, formed the principal guard of the gun; and the welcome of our old comrades was such as we should have received had we come back from the grave. They had long since made up their minds that they had seen the last of us; and it was quite amusing to witness these brave *tirailleurs* as they gathered around Lincoln and his comrades to hear the story of our adventures.

Indian Weapons and Ornaments.

CHAPTER LV.

A WHOLESALE CAPTURE.

N a few minutes our greetings were over. Twing moved on, taking with him his squadron of mounted men. I had made up my mind to take the *opposite road*—the "back track." I was now in command of a force—my own—and I felt keenly the necessity of doing something to redeem my late folly. Clayley was as anxious as myself.

"You do not need them any longer?" said I to Ripley, a gallant young fellow, who commanded the howitzer.

"No, captain; I have thirty artillerists here. It is strange if we can't keep the piece and manage it against ten times that number of such heroes as we have seen over yonder." And he pointed to the flying enemy on the other side of the barranca.

"What say you to going with us?"

"I should like it well; By Jove! but duty, my dear H.—duty. I must stay by the gun."

"Good-bye, then, comrade! We have no time to lose—farewell!"

"Good-bye; and if you're whipped, fall back on me. I'll keep the piece here till you return, and there'll be a good load of grape ready for anybody that may be in pursuit of you."

The company had by this time formed on the flank of the howitzer, and at the words "Forward!—quick time!" started briskly across the hills.

In a few minutes we had reached the point where the road trended for some distance along the brow of the precipice. Here we halted a moment; and taking Lincoln and Raoul, I crawled forward to our former point of observation.

Our time spent at the battery had been so short, that, with the difficulty which the enemy experienced in descending the cliff, the head of their line had only now reached the bottom of the barranca. They were running in twos and threes towards the stream, which, near this point, impinged upon the foot of the precipice. With a small glass that I had obtained from Ripley I could see their every movement. Some of them were without arms—they had doubtless thrown them away—while others still carried their muskets, and not a few were laden with knapsacks, and heavy burdens, too; the household gods—perhaps stolen ones—of their own camp. As they reached the greensward dropping down in a constant stream, they rushed forward to the water, scrambling into it in thirsty crowds, and falling upon their knees to drink. Some of them filled their canteens and went on.

"They intend to take the hills," thought I. I knew there was no water for miles in that direction.

As I swept the glass round the bottom of the cliff, I was

struck with an object that stood in a clump of palm-trees. It was a mule saddled, and guarded by several soldiers more richly uniformed than the masses who were struggling past them.

"They are waiting for some officer of rank," thought I. I moved the glass slowly along the line of descending bodies, and upward against the rocks to a small platform, nearly half-way up the cliff. Several bright uniforms flashed upon the lens. The platform was shaded with palms; and I could see that this party had halted a moment for the purpose (as I then conjectured) of allowing the foremost fugitives to pioneer the wooded bottom. I was right. As soon as these had crossed the stream, and made some way in the jungle along its banks, the former continued their descent; and now I saw what caused my pulse to beat feverishly—that one of these carried a dark object on his back. An object? —a man—and that man could be no other than the lame tyrant of Mexico.

I can scarcely describe my feelings at this moment. The young hunter who sees noble game—a bear, a panther a buffalo—within reach of his rifle for the first time, might feel as I did. I hated this man, as all honest men must and should hate a cowardly despot. During our short campaign I had heard many a well-authenticated story of his base villainy, and I believe at that moment I would have willingly parted with my hand to have brought him as near to me as he appeared under the field of the telescope. I thought I could even distinguished the lines, deep furrowed by guilt, on his dark, malice-marked face; and as I became sure of the identity, I drew back my head, cautioning my companions to do the same.

Now was the time for action, and putting up the glass, we crawled back to our comrades. I had learned from Raoul that the dark line which I had noticed before was, as

I had conjectured, the cañon of a small arroyo, heavily timbered, and forming a gap or pass that led to the Plan River. It was five miles distant, instead of three. So much the better, and with a quick, crouching gait we were once more upon our way. I had told my comrades enough to make some of them as eager as I. Many of them would have given half a life for a shot at game like that. Not a few of them remembered they had lost a brother on the plains of Goliad, or at the fortress of the Alamo.

The Rangers, moreover, had been chafing "all day for a fight," and now, so unexpectedly led at something like it, they were just in the humor. They moved as one man, and the five miles that lay between us and the gorge were soon passed to the rear. We reached it, I think, in about an hour. Considering the steep pass through which the enemy must come, we knew there was a breathing-time, though not long, for us; and during this I matured my plans, part of which I had arranged upon the route.

A short survey of the ground convinced us that it could not have been better fitted for an ambuscade had we chosen it at our leisure. The gorge or cañon did not run directly up the cliff, but in a zigzag line, so that a man at the top could only alarm another coming up after him by shouting or firing his piece. This was exactly what we wanted, knowing that, although we might capture a few of the foremost, those in the rear, being alarmed, could easily take to the river bottom and make their escape through the thickets. It was our design to make our prisoners, if possible, without firing a single shot; and this, under the circumstances, we did not deem an impossible matter.

The pass was a dry arroyo, its banks fringed with large pines and cotton-woods, matted together by llianas and vines. Where the gorge debouched into the uplands, its banks were high and naked, with here and there a few scattered

palmettoes that grew up from huge hassocks of bunch-grass.

Behind each of these bunches a rifleman was stationed, forming a deployed line, with its concave arc facing the embouchure of the gorge, and gradually closing in, so that it ended in a clump of thick chapparal upon the very verge of the precipice. At this point, on each side of the path, were stationed half a dozen men, in such a position as to be hidden from any party passing upward, until it had cleared the cañon and its retreat was secured against. At the opposite end of the elliptical deployment a stronger party was stationed, Clayley in command and Raoul to act as interpreter. Oakes and I took our places, commanding the separate detachments on the brow.

Our arrangements occupied us only a few minutes. I had to deal with men, many of whom had "surrounded" buffaloes in a somewhat similar manner; and it did not require much tact to teach them a few modifications in the game. In five minutes we were all in our places, waiting anxiously and in perfect silence.

As yet not a murmur had reached us from below, except the sighing of the wind through the tall trees, and the "sough" of the river as it tumbled away over its pebbly bed. Now and then we heard a stray shot, or the quick, sharp notes of a cavalry bugle; but these were far off, and only told of the wild work that was still going on along the road towards Encerro and Jalapa.

Not a word was spoken by us to each other. The men who were deployed along the hill lay hidden behind the hassocks of the palmettoes, and from our position not one of them was to be seen.

I must confess I felt strange emotions at this moment—one of the most anxious of my life; and although I felt no hate towards the enemy—no desire to injure one of them,

excepting him of whom I have spoken—there was something so wild, so thrilling, in the excitement of thus entrapping *man*, the highest of all animals, that I could not have foregone the inhuman sport. I had no intention that it should be inhuman. I well knew what would be their treatment as prisoners of war; and I had given orders that not a shot should be fired nor a blow struck, in case they threw down their arms and yielded without resistance. But for *him*—humanity had many a score to settle with him; and at the time I did not feel a very strong inclination to resist what would be the Rangers' desire on that question.

"Is not all our fine ambuscade for nothing?" I said to myself, after a long period of waiting, and no signs of an enemy.

I had begun to fancy as much, and to suspect that the flying Mexicans had kept along the river, when a sound like the humming of bees came up the pass. Presently it grew louder, until I could distinguish the voices of men. *Our* hearts as yet beat louder than their voices. Now the stones rattled, as, loosened from their sloping beds, they rolled back and downwards.

"*Guardaos, hombre!*" (Look out, man!), shouted one.

"*Carrajo!*" cried another; "take care what you're about! I haven't escaped the Yankee bullets to-day to have my skull cloven in that fashion. *Arriba! arriba!*"

"I say, Antonio—you're sure this road leads out above?"

"Quite sure, *camarado*."

"And then on to Orizava?"

"On to Orizava—*derecho, derecho*."

"But how far—*hombre?*"

"Oh! there are halting-places—*pueblitos*."

"*Vaya!* I don't care how soon we reach them. I'm as hungry as a famished coyote."

"*Carrai!* the coyotes of these parts won't be hungry for some time. *Vaya!*"

"Who knows whether they've killed 'El Cojo'?"

"'Catch a fox, kill a fox.' No. He's found some hole to creep through, I warrant him.

'El que mata un ladron
Tiene cien años de perdon.'"

(He who kills a robber will receive a hundred years of pardon for the offense.)

This was hailed with a sally by the very men who, only one hour ago, were shouting themselves hoarse with the cries of "*Viva el general! Viva Santa Anna!*" And on they scrambled, talking as before, one of them informing his comrades with a laugh that if "los Tejanos" could lay their hands upon "El Cojo," they, the Mexicans, would have to look out for a new president.

They had now passed us. We were looking at their backs. The first party contained a string of fifteen or twenty, mostly soldiers of the "raw battalions"—conscripts who wore the white linen jackets and wide, sailor-looking pantaloons of the volunteer.

Raw as these fellows were, either from their position in the battle, or, more likely, from a better knowledge of the country, they had been able thus far to make their escape, when thousands of their veteran companions had been captured. But few of them were armed; they had thrown their guns away in the hurry of flight.

At this moment we could distinguish the voices of Raoul:

"*Alto! abajo las armas!*" (Halt! down with arms!)

At this challenge we could see—for they were still in sight—that some of the Mexicans leaped clear up from the ground. One or two looked back, as if with the intention

of re-entering the gorge, but a dozen muzzles met their gaze.

"*Adelante ! adelante !—somos amigos*" (Forward !—we are friends), I said to them in a half-whisper, fearing to alarm their comrades in the rear, at the same time waving them onward.

As on one side Clayley presented a white flag, while on the other there was to be seen a bunch of dark yawning tubes, the Mexicans were not long in making their choice. In a minute they had disappeared from our sight, preferring the companionship of Clayley and Raoul, who would know how to dispose of them in a proper manner.

We had scarcely got rid of these when another string debouched up the glen, unsuspicious as were their comrades of the fate that awaited them.

These were managed in a similar manner; and another and another party, all of whom were obliged to give up their arms and fling themselves to the earth, as soon as they had reached the open ground above.

This continued until I began to grow fearful that we were making more prisoners than we could safely hold, and on the knowledge of this fact they might try to overpower us.

But the tempting prize had not yet appeared. He could not be far distant, and, allured by this prospect, I determined to hold out a while longer.

A termination, however, to our wholesale trapping was brought about by an unexpected event. A party, consisting of some ten or fifteen men, many of them officers, suddenly appeared, and marched boldly out of the gorge.

As these struck the level ground we could hear the "*Alto !*" of Raoul; but instead of halting as their companions had done, several of them drew their swords and pistols and rushed down the pass.

A volley from both sides stopped the retreat of some;

others escaped along the sides of the cliff; and a few—not over half a dozen—succeeded in entering the gorge. It was, of course, beyond our power to follow them; and I ordered the deployed line to close in around the prisoners already taken, lest they should attempt to imitate their braver comrades.

We had no fear of being assailed from the ravine. Those who had gone down carried a panic along with them that would secure us from that danger. At the same time we knew that the tyrant would now be alarmed and escape.

Several of the Rangers—*souvenirs* of Santa Fé and San Jacinto—requested my permission to go upon his "trail" and pick him off.

This request, under the circumstances, I could not grant, and we set about securing our prisoners. Gun-slings and waist-belts were soon spilt into thongs, and with these our captives were tied two and two, forming in all a battalion of a hundred and fifteen files—two hundred and thirty men.

With these arranged in such a manner as we could most conveniently guard them, we marched triumphantly into the American camp.

Peace Pipe.

CHAPTER LVI.

A DUEL, WITH AN ODD ENDING.

AFTER the battle of Cerro Gordo, our victorious troops pursued the enemy on to Jalapa, where the army halted to bring up its wounded, and prepare for an advance upon the capital of Mexico.

The Jalapeños did not receive us inhospitably—nor the Jalapeñas either. They expected, as a matter of course, that we would sack their beautiful city. This we did not do, and their gratitude enabled our officers to pass their time somewhat agreeably. The gay round that always succeeds a battle—for dead comrades are soon forgotten amidst congratulations and new titles—had no fascination for me.

The balls, the *tertulias* the *dias de campo*, were alike insipid and tiresome. *She* was not there—and where? I knew not. I might never see her again. All I knew was, that they had gone up the country—perhaps to Cordova or Orizava.

Clayley shared my feelings. The bright eyes in the balconies, the sweet voices in the orange-shaded patios of Jalapa,

had neither brightness nor music for us. We were both thoroughly miserable.

To add to this unhappy state of things, a bad feeling had sprung up among the officers of our army—a jealousy between the old and the new. Those of the old standing army holding themselves as a species of military aristocracy, looked upon their brethren of the new regiments as "interlopers"; and this feeling pervaded all ranks, from the commander-in-chief down to the lowest subaltern.

It did not, however, interest all individuals. There were many honorable men on both sides who took no part in a question so ridiculous, but, on the contrary, endeavored to frown it down. It was the child of idleness and a long spell of garrison duty. On the eve of a battle it always disappeared. I have adverted to this, not that it might interest the reader, but as explaining a result connected with myself.

One of the most prominent actors in this quarrel, on the side of the "old regulars," was a young officer named Ransom, a captain in an infantry regiment. He was a good fellow in other respects, and a brave soldier, I believe; his chief weakness lay in a claim to be identified with the "aristocracy."

It is strange that this miserable ambition is always strongest where it should exist with the least propriety. I have observed, in traveling though life—and so has the reader, no doubt—that *parvenus* are the greatest sticklers for aristocratic privilege: and Captian Ransom was no exception to this rule. In tumbling over some old family papers, I had found a receipt from the gallant captain's grandfather to my own progenitor, acknowledging the payment of a bill for leather breeches.

It so happened that this very receipt was in my portmanteau at the time; and, nettled at the "carryings on" of the tailor's grandson, I drew it forth and spread it out upon the

mess-table. My brethren of the mess were highly tickled at the document, several of them copying it off for future use.

A copy soon reached Ransom, who in his hour of indignation made use of certain expressions that, in their turn, soon reached me.

The result was a challenge borne by my friend Clayley, and the affair was arranged for the following morning.

The place chosen for our morning's diversion was a sequestered spot upon the banks of the river Zedena, and along the solitary road that leads out towards the Cofre de Peroté.

At sunrise we rode out in two carriages, six of us, including our seconds and surgeons. About a mile from town we halted, and, leaving the carriages upon the road, crossed over into a small glade in the midst of the chapparal.

It was as pretty a spot for our purpose as the heart could wish for, and had often, we were informed, been used for similar morning exercises—that was, before chivalry had died out among the descendants of Cortez and the conquerors.

The ground was soon lined off—ten paces—and we took our stands, back to back. We were to wheel at the word "Ready!" and fire at "One, two, three!"

We were waiting for the word, with that deathlike silence which always precedes a similar signal, when Little Jack, who had been left with the carriages, rushed into a glade, calling with all his might:

"Captain! captain!"

Every face was turned upon him with scowling inquiry, when the boy, gasping for breath, shouted out:

"The Mexicans are on the road!"

The words had scarcely passed his lips when the trampling of hoofs sounded in our ears, and the next moment a band of horsemen came driving pell-mell into the opening. At a single glance we recognized the guerilla!

Ransom, who was nearest, blazed away at the foremost of

the band, missing his aim. With a spring the guerillero was over him, his saber raised for the blow. I fired, and the Mexican leaped from his saddle with a groan.

"Thank you, Haller," cried my antagonist, as we rushed side by side towards the pistols.

There were four pairs in all, and the surgeons and seconds had already armed themselves, and were pointing their weapons at the enemy. We seized the remaining two, cocking them as we turned.

At this moment my eye fell upon a black horse, and, looking, I recognized the rider. He saw and recognized me at the same moment, and, driving the spurs into his horse's flanks, sprang forward with a yell. With one bound he was over me, his white teeth gleaming like a tiger's. His saber flashed in my eyes—I fired—a heavy body dashed against me—I was struck senseless to the earth!

I was only stunned, and in a few moments I came to my senses. Shots and shouts rang around me. I heard the trampling of hoofs and the groans of wounded men.

I looked up. Horsemen in dark uniforms were galloping across the glade and into the woods beyond. I recognized the yellow facings of the American dragoons.

I drew my hand over my face; it was wet with blood. A heavy body lay across mine, which Little Jack, with all his strength, was endeavoring to drag off. I crawled from under it, and, bending over, looked at the features. I knew them at a glance. I muttered to my servant:

"Dubrosc! He is dead!"

His body lay spread out in its picturesque attire. A fair form it was. A bullet—my own—had passed through his heart, killing him instantly. I placed my hand upon his forehead. It was cold already, and his beautiful features were white and ashy. His eyes glared with the ghastly expression of death.

"Close them," I said to the boy, and turned away from the spot.

Wounded men lay around, dragoons and Mexicans, and some were already dead.

A party of officers was at the moment returning from the pursuit, and I recognized my late adversary, with our seconds and surgeons. My friend Clayley had been wounded in the *mêlée*, and I observed that he carried his arm in a sling. A dragoon officer galloped up.

It was Colonel Harding.

"These fellows, gentlemen," cried he, reining up his horse, "just came in time to relieve me from a disagreeable duty. I have orders from the commander-in-chief to arrest Captains Haller and Ransom.

"Now, gentlemen," he continued with a smile, "I think you have had fighting enough for one morning, and if you will promise me to be quiet young men, and keep the peace, I shall for once in my life, take the liberty of disobeying a general's orders. What say you, gentlemen?"

It needed not this appeal. There had been no serious cause of quarrel between my adversary and myself, and, moved by a simlar impulse, we both stepped forward and grasped one another by the hand.

"Forgive me, my dear Haller," said Ransom; "I retract all. I assure you my remarks were only made upon the spur of the moment, when I was angry about those cussed leather breeches."

"And I regret to have given you cause," I replied. "Come with me to my quarters. Let us have a glass of wine together, and we shall light our cigars with the villainous document."

A burst of laughter followed, in which Ransom good-naturedly joined; and we were soon on our way to town, seated in the same carriage, and the best friends in creation!

* * * * * *

Some of the soldiers who had "rifled" the body of Dubrosc found a paper upon him which proved that the Frenchman was a spy in the service of Santa Anna. He had thrown himself into the company at New Orleans with the intention of gaining information, and then deserting on his arrival at Mexico. This he succeeded in doing in the manner detailed. Had he been in command of the "Rifle Rangers," he would doubtless have found an opportunity to deliver them over to the enemy at La Virgen or elsewhere.

Artistic and Unique Pottery of the Aztecs.

CHAPTER LVII.

A BRACE OF RUFFIAN SOLDIERS.

SHORTLY after the occurrence of the duel, some changes were made in the quarters of the American army. Worth, commanding the vanguard division, had pushed forward to Peroté, and occupied the town and fortress; but the arrival of fresh regiments from the United States rendered it necessary that a camp should be formed, as in Jalapa there was not barrack-room to accommodate the troops. A camp was accordingly chosen at a place called Serena —a hacienda about a league and a half out of Jalapa, and nearer the mountains. Here a division of the army went into cantonment, to wait some troops still on their way from the United States, before making the final advance upon the capital.

The "Rifle Rangers" was one of the corps destined to camp

duty at Serena, and this announcement was received by my comrades with feelings akin to dismay.

"Leave Jalapa!" echoed a dozen voices in tones of indignation.

"Ay, just so," muttered Blossom; "always the way—just as one was getting comfortably fixed!"

"Hard case—ain't it, lads?" said Twing, taking a pull at his flask. "Pretty town Jalapa—pretty girls. Hard luck to leave it!"

"But what sort of a place is Serena?" asked one. "I never heard of it."

"Only a hacienda," replied Blossom—"a posada—a country inn—no houses—no fuel—plenty of water—mud knee-deep: a confounded nasty hole—that's what it is."

"The plague take old Scott!" said one. "I wish he was in—in—in——"

"Say Hong Kong, major," suggested a young officer, interrupting the major's fearful anathema against the commander-in-chief.

"Too good for him," said the major—"he always serves *me* so. If there's any work either dirty or dangerous, old Blos is sure to have it. Anything good enough for him;" and here the major uttered another of his picturesque exclamations.

The order of a commander-in-chief requires obedience, and in ten hours after its reception we were marching out of Jalapa, the lovely Jalapeñas saluting us with parting smiles as we passed under their balconies.

We found Serena what the major had represented it, a filthy mud-hole, with nothing in creation to recommend it for a military cantonment but water. That we had to our hearts' content, for the rainy season had just set in, and we were treated each day to some five or six hours of a "planet" shower. During these hours the rain fell as if

from a thousand spouts, and it was utterly impossible to pu. one's nose out of one's tent without being wet to the shirt. It is true we had bright mornings up till twelve; but what of that? There was nowhere to go. We might stroll through the neighboring fields and thickets, taking care not to go too far, as some of our fellows had been carried in without any breath in their bodies, and a † neatly carved on their cold foreheads.

God help us! never was there such a camp as ours at Serena. To make matters more disagreeable to me, I had lost for a time the cheerful companionship of my friend Clayley, as the lieutenant, who had not yet recovered from his wounds, remained in Jalapa. His place in my affections was temporarily supplied by a brave but somewhat singular, fellow named Taplin, also a lieutenant in our corps, who, previous to his joining the army, had led a wild and adventurous life upon the prairies. He was still young, but taciturn, and of modest demeanor, though as bold as a lion. His cool courage and perilous experiences greatly interested me, and we were much in each other's company.

"Come, come, let us be off, Harry!"

It was the voice of my friend Taplin that reached me one morning as we turned on our heels after saluting the officer of the day.

"Where to-day?"

My friend hesitated, coloring slightly.

"I need not have asked," continued I, observing that Taplin was embarrassed.

"Well—what of it? One must find some way of killing time. The captive trains a spider, and why should not I——"

"Be a fly, caught by a Mexican tarantula! Ay, caught, Charles Taplin—sober Charles Taplin!"

"Pshaw, captain! you're crazed."

Travel's Peculiarities. Perils of Sleeping in a Mexican Forest.

"Or you. Well, if we must go that way, it is time to be off. They will now be returning from the city. *Vamos!*"

We struck a path into the chapparal, which, after winding through the flowery glades, debouched upon the main road near Banderilla. We walked downhill in the direction of Jalapa, looking before us. At a bend in the road, where the trees hung over, we descried the objects we were in search of. They were an Indian family: an old and very reverend-looking man, two well grown girls, his daughters, and a quick, intelligent lad. Two or three donkeys and a huge dog of the San Bernard breed completed the group. The Indian himself was dressed in the leathern costume of the country, and carried over his shoulder the never-failing serapé. The boy wore a similar garb, while the girls were tastefully attired in bright *naguas* and snowy chemisettes.

There was something peculiar about this family. For many days we had met them journeying homeward from the market of Jalapa. We had been attracted at first by their quiet manners and their apparent domestic unity. We had met them several times without seeing the faces of the girls. They had worn their rebozos drawn, in the style termed "tapado." We at length saw them unveiled, and from that moment the interest of my companion was heightened. It became a passion—it became love—a love, too, as ardent as it was sudden.

He had fixed upon the younger as the object, though the two girls were very like each other. Both were, to say the least, of exceeding beauty, and would have attracted the attention of any other pair of idlers far less romantic than we. It was a style of beauty peculiar to the Aztec Indian—for of this race they were: aquiline features, with something of that expression which distinguishes the maidens of the Jewish race. Their eyes were Mongolian—oblique—and, as they are termed by novelists, "almond-shaped." The

rice-like rows of their teeth were partly concealed by lips of a purplish red, while the same hue, bursting through the silky bronze of their cheeks, imparted to them an appearance of extreme health. Their thick black hair, arranged in plaits, hung down behind, reaching far below the waist. These plaits were confined by gay ribbons, looped into tasteful knots at the end.

Notwithstanding the interest which my companion and I had taken in this singular family, we had not yet succeeded in "scraping up" an acquaintance with them. We had got no farther than the exchange of a "*buenos dias*" and a few remarks on the weather.

"I hope they will not run away from us to-day," muttered Taplin, as we approached them. "But they will, though. See the old fellow!—he's moving already!"

As my friend spoke I could see the Indian making a sign to his daughters. The latter rose from the bank on which they had been resting, drew their rebozos over their cheeks, like a pair of Persian beauties, and mounting their donkeys, *à la Duchesse de Berri*, rode off.

"*Buenos dias, niñas*," said my friend, with a vexed look as they passed.

"*Buenos dias, caballeros*," was the reply; and at the same moment the old Indian stalked up, saluting me with a wave of his broad sombrero, and a polite but significant "*adios*," which seemed to say, "We wish no further conversation at this time, gentlemen."

The boy, the remaining donkey, and the dog followed. while my companion and I turned back towards the camp—Taplin, at least, suffering all the bitterness of disappointment.

But my friend was resolved upon deserving success by perseverance. Again on the morrow we set forth from camp, directing our course as on former occasions. We fell into the main road and commenced descending. On nearing

the bend where we were in the habit of meeting the Indian family, our ears were assailed with unusual sounds—screams and shouting. We heard the bark and "worrying" of a dog. We ran forward, in a few seconds rounding the angle of the road. The Indian and his family were before us. Two strange men—soldiers we saw—had seized upon the girls, and were endeavoring to force them into the thicket. One of the ruffians battled the dog—the San Bernard—with his bayonet, while with his other hand he clasped the terrified and trembling girl. The boy was fighting manfully to rescue his sisters, and the old Indian ran frantically over the road.

My companion and I did not stay to contemplate a picture so unexpected, but dashed forward at once. We knew the men at a glance—two of the most disorderly rascals in the regiment. In a moment they were sprawling upon the ground, and it now required all our exertions to prevent the San Bernard from making a meal of them. They were at length secured with strong cords, which Pepé, the Indian lad, had furnished from his packing gear, handing them to us with a grin of satisfaction.

Now, for the first time, my friend and I saw the two girls fairly unveiled. Their rebozos had been torn off in the struggle, and they stood before us in all their wild, singular beauty, heightened in its effect by the carnation tinge which the late excitement had lent to their cheeks. Their little bosoms heaved and fell, while their eyes were sparkling with mixed emotions of fear and gratitude. We stopped some moments to reassure our new acquaintances, for we deemed that we now had the title so to call them; and then, placing our brace of ravishers at the points of our sabers, prepared to march them into camp. Taplin lingered and looked back.

"What is it?" I asked, seeing that something was troubling him,

"I forgot that Indian's son: he's a sharp boy that, or I'm mightily fooled about him. I must give him a something. *Hola, moochacher?*"

Taplin's Spanish was none of the best, but it brought the boy with the others to a quick halt.

"Here, *moochacher;* take this"—and he held up a fine spring-knife. The boy came running back, and with demonstrations of gratitude took the knife, and returned to the rest.

"It's no harm to make a friend of that lad. Who knows how soon one may stand in need of a post?"

Laughing at this odd act of providence on the part of my friend, we drove our prisoners before us, and shortly afterwards gave them in charge to the camp guard.

Next morning, before the parade-drum had ceased rolling, we were far through the woods, on our way to the scene of our yesterday's adventure. Taplin bounded forward, his heart filled with the expectancy of a most gracious reception by our new friends. We reached the bend in the road where the trees hung over. They had not yet arrived. We seated ourselves upon the bank and waited. We rose again (Taplin all the while very impatient), and paced the causeway up and down. *They came not.* We loitered until the hour of rain, and still they came not.

"What if they come no more?" said Taplin, with a sigh.

They came not on the morrow, nor again upon the morrow (though still we waited and watched).

"*They will come no more*," said my friend, while his countenance exhibited an air of deep dejection.

This became our conviction at length. I can hardly describe its effect upon myself, though from feelings far apart from love—much less can I picture that produced upon my companion. The circumstance of our daily "waylaying" the old Indian and his family was the only one connected

with our camp-life at Serena that possessed the least interest. We became worse *ennuyéed* than ever, and Taplin looked at times as if he contemplated suicide. The two soldiers did not benefit much by this state of feeling, on the occasion of their trial by court-martial, which followed soon after. Their backs were well scored by the cat-o-nine-tails, and their pay was stopped for a couple of months.

Types of Indian Women.

CHAPTER LVIII.

A BRACE OF FOOLISH OFFICERS.

"IT is of no use going down the road again," I said to my friend, after many journeys made to no purpose.

"Come along—let us try once more," answered he.

"Let us ride, then: we can procure a couple of mustangs."

"Very well," replied Taplin.

The mustangs were soon upon the spot, and furnished with saddles and bridles.

"*Up* the road!" cried Taplin, mounting, and spurring forward as if with a desperate desire to get clear of the camp.

"We cannot ride far *up* the road," said I, closing in. "There is danger beyond Banderilla——"

"Danger be d——d! Come on, Hal!" shouted my com-

rade, stretching his mustang into a gallop. I did not comprehend why Taplin wished to go *up* the road, but I did not oppose his inclination, and followed at his heels, determined to offer advice when my companion became more cool.

We soon came to Banderilla. There is a posada at one end of the village, and a like posada at the other. These posadas were kept at the time by Frenchmen, who drove a good trade with the straggling soldiery. Their stock consisted chiefly of whisky and tobacco, both of the most wretched kind. In such miserable times, however, Taplin and I were not above taking a glass of whisky; and, pulling up at the first posada, we drank one. Vile stuff it was and went to our heads like electric fire.

We remounted, and galloped on to posada number two. Here we imbibed a second time. At this house they gave us a better article, which they kept in order to seduce the soldiers beyond the rival establishment. It was known as "Catalan," a species of Spanish brandy.

After drinking it, I left Taplin at the bar, and stepped out look after our ponies. My friend soon followed, and handed me a flat, oval-shaped bottle, which he desired me to carry. I saw that it was filled with "Catalan"; at the same time I saw Taplin thrusting the mate of it into an empty holster upon his saddle.

"Which way now?" I asked, as we sprang on horseback.

"Up the road still. Come on, old boy! Let's make a day of it!"

The two fiery drinks had made me quite as reckless as my companion, and I remember following him with the exclamation:

"Here's at you, then!"

We had not heard, certainly, that there were guerilla corps in the neighborhood; for since the advance of the Ameri-

can vanguard these had gone further up the country towards the capital. We knew, however, that the peasantry had been exasperated by acts of outrage on the part of our straggling soldiers. Several of the latter were missing, and one or two had been murdered upon the very road we were traveling. The former might have deserted, and the latter had, no doubt, provoked and merited the fate that had befallen them. With these reflections, or rather without any reflection at all, we rode forward, far beyond the lines either of picket or patrol. Our hearts were buoyant and without fear. I cannot describe their buoyancy. We felt like men fresh escaping from a prison. For days we had looked abroad, and with longing eyes, over the beautiful country that surrounded our camp. We dare not traverse it. Our dragoons were few, and we were unable to keep the road open by our patrols. We had gazed, hour after hour, on the green hills and sunny slopes that girdle the bases of the great Cordillera; we had seen the sun shining on many a bright object, and flinging his rays into the smiling valleys of Jalapa; but we dared not venture into their shady dells. In our breasts had sprung up that mysterious feeling which has given rise to the common but truthful adage that "distance lends enchantment." We longed to traverse those enchanted regions; and now, suddenly realizing that wish, our hearts beat with all the wildness of a full and unexpected gratification. Our relations to the scenes around us rendered it still more exciting. The denizens of these scenes were our enemies—our bitter, vengeful foes. Every step we took was fraught with danger, and this knowledge, playing upon our nerves, added to their wild and passionate vibration.

We reached San Miguel Soldado (St. Michael the Soldier), the beautiful *paraje* of the muleteers. We rode around the quaint old church, where it stands like a watch-tower,

overlooking the broad, palm-covered plains of the "*tierra caliente.*" We entered its plaza.

San Miguel, we have said, is a parajé—a halting place for muleteers. An atajo had just arrived, and the arrieros were eating *chicharones* in front of the inn. My companion and I had grown hungry; the "Catalan" had sharpened our appetites. We could not witness the operation of eating without a desire to join in it. We would dine at the *fonda.* What could they give us?

"*Chicharones y pan*" (Bread and chicharones), was the answer. We could get eggs besides, and chilli peppers to our hearts' content.

"Well, let us have them all," cried Taplin, alighting from his horse.

While dinner was waited for, we strolled about in front of the fonda, scanning the arrieros. There were many faces among them that we did not like, and particularly those of a small party of men who entered the town after us. There were five or six of these fellows in all, and we perceived that they kept apart in one corner of the fonda, whispering and making mysterious signs to each other. I thought they were not arrieros. Their costume was somewhat different. It bespoke men above the class of peasants, yet below that of gentlemen. They might be robbers or guerilleros.

I whispered my suspicions to Taplin.

"Nothing like it—nonsense, captain! They are some rancheros who have ridden into the town to buy chocolate for their wives and chingarito for themselves. Come! take another 'swig' of the 'Catalan' before we start."

"We shall then ride back to camp?"

"No: first let us ascend that hill. You see where the road winds up it. From the top is a splendid view, I warrant—something worth the trouble of climbing for. I like a good view."

"Lead on, then!"

We left San Miguel Soldado and its arrieros behind us, and wound up the National Road until we reached the summit of the hill. Not far from this the road enters the pine woods, winding through steep and shady passes to the romantic hamlet of La Hoya.

My comrade was right in promising me a fair prospect from the hill. There are few such landscapes on the continent of America—few so interesting in the world.

It was midday. The sun was in the zenith, and shining from a tropical sky. Below us, at our feet, lay the picturesque parajé of San Miguel, its painted cupola glistening brilliantly under the full sunbeams. So near did the little church seem to us, that it was difficult to conceive we had been riding from it for over an hour. In the gardens of the village, fair girls were plucking flowers, or making merry under the shadow of spreading trees. We could see the arrieros in the streets, as they buckled on their mule-packs, or led their jaded animals to the long watering-trough in the plaza. Further down we could descry the turrets and azoteas of Jalapa cresting the summit of an elevated hill. Beyond this, for forty miles, stretched the palmy plains of the "*tierra caliente*," a brilliant picture of green and gold. The white walls of distant haciendas—the red tiled roofs of ranches—the domes and spires of churches, bearing upon their highest pinnacles the emblem of the Christian faith—could be distinguished far towards the eastern shores of Anahuac. Beyond all these rolled the Mexican Sea, glittering like an ocean of liquid fire. It was one of the loveliest landscapes I have ever looked upon. The day was favorable for viewing it. Perhaps the "Catalan" added to its loveliness by illusion. I cannot tell; but I remember afterwards looking back on the same landscape, when on the

"route" for the valley of Mexico, and I received from it at that time a far less sublime impression.

I was sweetly dreaming over the fair panorama, directing my eyes towards a spot that interested me, when an exclamation from my comrade interrupted my reverie. I turned, and beheld him looking towards the left, in an attitude that betokened the interest he felt in some object.

"What are you gazing at?" I asked.

"Look yonder!" said he; "do you see that odd-shaped building on the brow of a great gulf—a barranca, I believe they call it?"

"Yes—what of it?"

"That's one of their celebrated places—the birthplace of a great saint, though only a baby. You have heard of the 'Niño de Atocha?'"

I replied in the affirmative. I had heard of the "Child of Atocha," and had seen pictures and images of this remarkable saint in almost every Mexican cottage I had entered.

"Well, that's where the holy boy was born. Come! let us go there."

"Nonsense!" I replied; "it's ten miles from our road."

"Not five, captain. Why, I could almost hit that queer old church with a bullet from my pistol."

"But the risk, my dear friend?"

"Risk! there's none. There ain't a fighting Mexican nearer than Orizava, where they are all collecting around old Santy. There's not one on that side of the road, anyhow. Come, captain!"

I should have used further arguments to dissuade Taplin from such a foolish excursion, but I knew him too well for that. A strange man he was—the rashest I ever saw in throwing himself into danger, yet, when once fairly in it, I never knew one who met it with greater coolness. His daring courage had won my admiration. He had often proved

it. He had mounted his horse, shouldered his rifle, and ridden through the prairie-desert for hundreds of miles alone. He had done this more than once. They who have read the records of western life will recognize his name, and the truth of my assertion. Having once made up his mind to a deed, nothing could dissuade him from attempting its execution. I knew this, and I knew it was idle to expostulate with him now.

"Come, Hal," he continued, "it's not far; besides, it's almost on our way. We can cut across the hill. I have often wished to go there. Harkye!" he added in a significant whisper, "I've got an idea that our old Indian lives there."

I knew, from the manner in which Taplin said this, that he was resolved to go; and had I refused to accompany him, he would have ridden off without me. I assented, therefore, to the proposition by turning my horse's head in the direction pointed out by my friend.

"Let us take a pull at the 'Catalan' before we start," said he, drawing the green bottle out of his holster.

"Agreed," replied I, imitating him by uncorking the one which I myself carried.

The liquor was soon quaffed, and, returning the bottles to their places, we struck into a narrow bridle-road that seemed to lead to the birthplace of "the Child of Atocha."

Mexican Sugar-cane Peddler.

CHAPTER LIX.

"THE CHILD OF ATOCHA."

WE followed this path for, I should think, a distance of more than five miles; but the last pull at the "Catalan" must have been "the rose-leaf on the brimming jar," for I do not remember much of the country we passed through.

I can only recollect that it was but little inhabited, if at all. The road lay through woods and thickets, and the path was steep and hilly, appearing to zigzag more than any other I had ever traveled upon. At times our wiry animals seemed to stand upon their heads as we descended the sides of some narrow ravine.

"We must be near it now," said Taplin, as we climbed up out of a steep valley. "Ugh! how dark it has grown! We are going to catch a deluge of a shower!"

My companion had scarcely made the remark when the black cloud that had been gradually gathering over the sky was split asunder by electric wedges, and detached masses began to float over us like huge birds of prey.

The thunder rolled above our heads and around us, and then a heavy body of dark vapor commenced moving down the sides of the mountains, as if on its way carrying destruction to the smiling valleys at our feet.

Bright jets of flame shot to and fro, lighting up the opaque masses, followed by loud peals like the discharges of a heavy battery. These broke upon our ears at short intervals, rumbling off into the glens of the echoing hills.

Another body of vapor came floating along, and the next moment we were enveloped in a mist that rivalled night in its mysterious darkness. My horse suddenly halted, with a snort.

"Ride on! ride on!" cried Taplin, seeing that I blocked up the narrow path.

"Hold!—for Heaven's sake, pull back!" I screamed to my companion. "We are riding upon the brow of a precipice!"

I had caught a glimpse of a fearful chasm beneath and directly before us, into which we were spurring our horses! But for the sagacity of the animals, we might have ridden to death.

"Strike to the right!" cried Taplin, as he saw an opening in that direction.

I drew my snorting horse away from the cliff, and headed him to the right. He commenced descending, but slowly and with instinctive caution, scenting the track as he went.

The road led among low timber, and we were baffled with the branches.

An Onyx Mine of Old Mexico.

The storm now broke upon us in all its fury. There seemed to be no limit to the rage of the elements. Rain, wind, thunder, lightning, and cloud vied with each other as to which could produce the most terrific effects. The broad leaves, as we rode under them, flouted up and down, and flapped spitefully in our faces. The branches cracked and broke around us, and in less than five minutes we were drenched to our shirts.

Mexican Indians Preparing a Meal.

We were almost in darkness, still enveloped by the thick, opaque volume of the mist.

After struggling on for some time, the hoarse barking of a dog sounded in our ears; and our horses, as if attracted by the signal, commenced moving in that direction.

We soon cleared the mist, and on looking about we perceived that we were still on the edge of the precipice, but at

a point where it was not so steep. Along its base we could discern a thick grove of tropical trees, and upon the broad wet leaves the sun was shining until they glistened like sheets of gold.

We had suddenly stepped from storm to sunshine, though the wet and flouted leaves, with here and there a broken branch, told us that among them the elements had been at play.

We were looking for a path to descend the cliffs, when a voice sounded upon our ears:

"*Caballeros, bajan por aca!*" (Come down this way, gentlemen.)

It was a man's voice. It reached us from below.

We looked in the direction whence it came. We could distinguish the red tiles upon the roof of a cottage; they appeared above the low trees. The voice must have proceeded thence, but we could see no one; our eyes were still weak from the blaze of the electric fire.

The admonition was repeated; and then, as if borne by some sweet echo, the words, "*Por aca! por aca!*" came ringing through the trees in the soft, silvery tones of a female voice.

We now looked with more earnestness, shading our eyes from the sunbeam, and amidst the foliage we began to distinguish moving objects. We could perceive the flutter of female dresses, while the voices kept urging us to descend. An animal rushed across an open glade below; we recognized the brown, shaggy coat of the San Bernard. The next moment he came bounding up the zigzag path, and leaped joyfully before us.

We descended by the same road, and at the bottom of the cliff were met by the old Indian and his family—the objects of our wild excursion.

The busy Pepé seized the bridles of our horses, and led them off towards the ranche; while the two girls, with all

the fondness and familiarity of sisters, ran up to us, and, placing their hands upon our dripping garments, exclaimed:

"*Ah, que pobres! tan mojadaz!*" (Ah, poor fellows! so wet, too!)

Led by our host and his daughters, we soon reached the ranche—a small structure of adobés, surrounded by a picket-like fence of the columnar cacti. In front of this enclosure we were met and welcomed by the mother of the family.

Our wet garments became an object of solicitude; but the quick-witted Pepé was already kindling a bunch of dry pine-knots under the trees outside the enclosure, and Taplin undertook to assist him. In a short time the fire blazed up; and as the girls, by a sign from their mother, had entered the ranche, we drew up to the burning fagots, and entered into conversation with our Indian host.

We soon learned the history of the simple old man. He lived by weaving petatés from the leaves of the palmilla, or sombrero palm. He carried them to the plaza of Jalapa. His children assisted him in his art. His daughters wove baskets from the fibers of the yucca—those pretty little baskets we admire so much in the bazaars. They prepared the reeds with their own hands, and stained them into the bright colors of red and blue and yellow. They carried them to Jalapa, where they were sold to the *ricos*, and also to merchants, who sent them beyond the sea.

While listening to the old Indian, I could perceive that my friend Taplin's heart was wholly within the cottage, upon the door of which his eyes were steadily fixed. The two bright little objects, Pepita and Ana, could be seen moving within; they were evidently engaged in culinary operations I was struck with the extreme interest which my friend seemed to take in their movements.

"Which of them do you admire the more, Taplin?" I asked jokingly.

"The little one," answered he, with a seriousness of manner that quite surprised me.

I knew it was the little one, without asking the question. Extremes attract each other. Taplin himself stood six feet in his boots.

"I am glad it is so," I replied; "we shall not be rivals. I admire the sister more."

"Sister? Not to compare, captain! Look yonder." And with a smile of extreme admiration he pointed towards the little Ana, who at that moment appeared at the door of the cottage.

"Tell me, lieutenant," said I, taking him by the arm and looking him in the face, "would you marry her?"

"To-morrow, by Jove!" was the emphatic reply.

I began to believe that my friend was really in love. There was an earnestness in his manner that I had before observed in relation to other matters, and that, I knew, indicated some resolution already made.

He was a man of just such a nature as to be interested in this peculiar way. The romantic wildness of his disposition fitted him for receiving an impression from just such a source, while the most flattered city belle might have fluttered her attractions before him in vain.

I knew he was too honorable to act otherwise than as a gentleman should, and, seeing the profound impression which the little "poblana" had made upon him, I began to fear that our foolish adventure would terminate in something serious.

For myself, I was but slightly interested—actuated solely by that undefinable impulse which I believe exists in the hearts of all men, and which impels them to approach the presence of loveliness as the iron atoms are drawn around the magnet; actuated, too, by that common vanity which impels us to win, if we can, the smiles of universal beauty.

But my heart was already in the keeping of another, and every hour was fraught with the sad foreboding that I might never more see its absent guardian.

As I stood musing in this way, my attention was suddenly arrested by the clatter of hoofs that came ringing up the glen. The next moment a horseman galloped into the open space in front of the ranche, and with a quick jerk drew his horse to his haunches, halting him.

He was a young man, dressed in the picturesque garb of a ranchero, though evidently above that class in social rank. His horse was sleek and fiery, his saddle richly mounted, and his huge spurs were of solid silver. The buttons on his jacket and calzoneros were of the same material; and the manga, which hung rakishly over his shoulders, was of the finest cloth. He was not a mere ranchero: that could be seen at a glance. Who was he? I whispered this query to our host.

"*El dueño*" (The master), was the reply.

"Ha!" muttered Taplin; "the master!" My friend was doubtless chagrined, as I was myself, to know that there was a master.

"Master of what?" I asked, with some petulance of manner.

"Of the hacienda, señor. Don Juan is the owner of all these lands. *Buenos dias, Don Juan!*" added the Indian, saluting the newcomer with a degree of humility that vexed us.

"*Buenos dias, viejo*" (Good day, old man), returned the other, with that haughtiness of manner which showed how little he valued the respect of his serf.

"Is the little Anita within?" he added, passing towards the house.

"*Si, Don Juan. A su disposicion*" (Yes, Don Juan. At your service).

"I only wish to light my cigar and drink a glass of *piñole*."

"*Esta bueno—esta bueno*" (Very well).

The stranger had now reached the door, where he communicated his wishes to the inmates of the cottage. Presently Pepita, the elder and taller of the girls, came out with the glass of the piñole, while her sister carried in her hands a small brazero filled with live coals.

We could hear Don Juan asking, "Who are these strangers?" and the reply that we were officers from the American Camp at Serena. Then followed the expression, "*Carrai! malditos!*" while the young man struck the flaps of his wide pantaloons with his leathern quirt in a violent and energetic manner.

I looked at my friend, who, like myself, had been watching every movement of the newcomer. The veins of Taplin's neck were swollen as the hot blood boiled upwards. His cheeks had turned pale, while the black circles had begun to form around his dark fiery eyes. The familiarity which the young *hacendado* seemed to take with the girls had roused his jealousy; and it was plain, moreover, that the attentions of the Mexican were bestowed chiefly upon the younger sister.

The elder, at length taking the empty glass, retired within the cottage, leaving Anita alone with the stranger, and still holding the brazero, that he might ignite his cigarrito. As they conversed in the porch, we could observe their movements minutely. At every action, on the part of the young man, that approached to familiarity, I could see Taplin, mechanically as it were, raise his hand to the hilt of his saber.

"Come!" said I—"keep cool, my friend. The young fellow means no harm. Let him have his scene out."

"Harm!" ejaculated my comrade between his teeth. "Only think of it! *He is her master!*"

"No! He is simply their landlord."

"And so—what can they not do here? Buy them—sell them for a bushel of Indian corn or a bag of beans! Anything—anything!"

The young girl was evidently ill at ease in the company of the sprig. He, on the other hand, seemed to take pleasure in his bravado courtship, glancing occasionally at us with a look of mock ferocity. When about to light his cigar for the fifth time, he bent forward over the brazero, and brought his lips in contact with the forehead of the girl. The latter drew back with an offended air. I turned to seize hold of Taplin. I was too late. He had already entered the enclosure with a single bound; and, before I could interpose, he caught the Mexican by his manga, and swung him like a child against the prickly fence of cactus. The soft plants yielded with a crash, and the body of the Mexican passed out to the opposite side.

"*Carajo! maldito!*" cried the latter, springing to his feet with a terrified but spiteful look.

"Take yourself off now, my spangled jay bird!" shouted Taplin, pointing to the woods. "Off with you while you have got the hair upon your head! *Vamos!*"

The hacendado, seeing the determined look with which the other approached him, seized the bridle of his horse, and, clambering into the saddle, disappeared without uttering another word.

The old Indian was astounded at seeing his dueño—to whom he owed everything—thus roughly handled. Poor old fellow! I felt vexed for him, and disposed to censure my friend for his passionate conduct. But there was another point to be considered. We were now under the risk of a real danger. We were far from camp, without knowing one foot of the road to it. We were both poorly armed; our light parade swords, with a pistol apiece, were all the weapons we had brought with us. The Mexican, strongly

exasperated, would not rest until he had obtained his revenge. He would be certain to collect his peons and return.

I urged these facts upon my comrade, but to no purpose. He had drunk too much of the "Catalan." There were no guerilleros in the neighborhood—that he had ascertained from our host; and he did not fear to meet scores of those unwarlike peons. Besides, they would not dare to ill-treat us so near our camp. They would fear a visit of retaliation from the Texas Rangers. He wound up by assuring the old Indian that, if Don Juan should give them the slightest trouble on our account, he would bring his own company—a regiment—the whole army to their rescue. He would harry the country until he should catch the "dueño." Such is love, maddened by drink and jealousy.

At the time I was not myself sufficiently rational to care much for consequences. I had inverted the flat bottle once too often; and, besides, our host had treated us to a cup of *mezcal*—a species of fiery whisky manufactured from the magueys—and this had finished the job. Though not a very creditable thing—I must confess the truth—neither of us was sober enough for the circumstances in which we were placed. We were not, either of us, drinkers by habit, but escaping as we had done from our camp-prison, we had surrendered ourselves up to the natural reaction of animal spirits. I can offer no further extenuation.

* * * * * *

I remember that we dined sitting cross-legged upon petatés, our host and his family waiting upon us, for they had eaten dinner before our arrival. I remember, after dinner, again urging on Taplin the necessity for taking our departure. No! He would wait to see the girls at their occupation. He would like to take a lesson in basket-weaving; and from this fancy I in vain endeavored to divert him. So we sat for hours, watching their little fingers weaving in the bright

fibers of the palmilla; Taplin, all the while, stretched at the feet of his mistress, entertaining her with stories of Yankee-land and the prairies, and once in a while venturing some expressions of a more endearing interest. I believe now, as I thought then, that the man really loved this little Indian belle—and, moreover, that he had succeeded in interesting her. Once or twice I saw her stealing upon him timid but fond glances, with that expression of confidence and respect which weak women instinctively yield to the courage that can protect and avenge her. Poor fellow! he never saw her again. But I anticipate.

* * * * * *

The red rays, as they slanted through the interstices of the cacti, admonished us that the sun was going down. We had become more rational, and prepared to set forth. Our horses were led up by Pepé, who had volunteered to guide us through the barranca—a difficult and dangerous pass through which our road lay.

We offered money, which was refused with much delicacy. "Presents, then," thought we; and, releasing our fingers of their golden circlets, we begged permission to leave them as tokens of remembrance. These were accepted; and with tender adieus, and promises (made in all sincerity by one of us at least) to return, we mounted our mustangs, and commenced descending the valley.

Indian Woman Decorating Earthenware. Pottery Merchant.

CHAPTER LX.

THE BARRANCA.

WE rode for some time in silence, allowing our horses to follow Pepé and the dog, which trotted nimbly before us. The ravine down which we traveled was fast shadowing into darkness. The approach of sable night has a gloomy effect on the wildest adventurers. My comrade was silent and abstracted. He rode some time in the rear. After we had journeyed a mile or so in this way, he spurred up alongside, with the exclamation:

"Here, Hal!"

"Well?" I inquired, seeing he was about to unburden himself.

"I think I have done wrong in meddling with that nigger. It may get them into trouble."

"Has that occurred to you only now?"

"By Thunder! if it does," added he, gritting his teeth, "I shall know it, too. The boy has promised to come to camp, and often. We shall hear all that passes, and if the —— Ha!"

I turned in my saddle to discover the cause of this last exclamation, which was uttered in a sharp, excited tone. Taplin was holding up the flap of his left holster, which had contained his pistol. The holster was empty!

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, hastily raising my own; "our pistols are gone!"

We looked at each other, without expressing by words what each knew the other understood—that *we were in danger*. Our pistols had been stolen, and by whom? We called Pepé. The boy knew nothing of them. Had he seen them at all? No. Had he looked into the holsters, and when? Yes, just after our arrival, and previous to the appearance of Don Juan. And what did they contain?—"*Dos botellas—nada mas*" (Two bottles—nothing more).

"When did you notice them last, Hal?" asked my comrade.

"Not since——" A thought struck me. "Now I know where the pistols are gone. You remember those ill-looking fellows at San Miguel? They have taken them while we were eating our chicharones in the fonda."

"Precisely so: that is where we lost them—fools that we have been! still, it is better than if they had been stolen from us at the ranche. It looks less like present danger."

"True enough; nevertheless, we had better be on our guard."

"On our guard! and with what? We have nothing left but these skewers, and they are handy enough for all the good they may do us. The devil take that 'Catalan'!"

The road now entered a deep gorge in the hills, through

which a torrent was dashing, brown and swollen with the late rain. The path lay along the stream, but gradually rising above the level of its bed, until the hissing, roaring water was heard far beneath—a hundred toises beneath—and apparently under our very feet. The path itself seemed to have been carved out of the face of the cliff: for high overhead rose frowning, precipitous walls, jaggy and naked, except where from seams and fissures hung branches of stunted cedar or clusters of the thorny cacti. Below the road the trees were more numerous and larger, straggling out horizontally from the rocks, down to the margin of the stream.

The road was Mexican in all its characteristics, and could be traveled by no animal less sure-footed than a mule or a mustang, either of which can rival a cat in climbing. Here and there huge masses of amygdaloid had fallen from the overhanging cliff, and rested upon the path in such a manner that, apparently, the strength of a child could have toppled them over. Around and over these it was necessary for us to clamber, sometimes squeezing ourselves through a crack hardly big enough to admit the bodies of our mustangs. We were lacerated, too, by the wild magueys, whose long, serrated leaves, straggling across the path, hooked into our clothes, and almost dragged us out of our seats. This was the barranca about which our Indian host had cautioned us, and he had not exaggerated its fearful reality. I have seen many such places, but none, to the best of my memory, that looked wilder or more gloomy than this. It was called, in the language of the country, "*Puerto del Infierno*," "The Gate of Hades!" and well did it seem to merit the appellation.

As if to add to the desolation around us, the moon became suddenly obscured; and, just as we were fairly within the jaws of the chasm, the storm recommenced in all its fury. The wind whistled in our faces and roared along the cliff. The shadowy pines rocked and cracked under the blast, and

the cold rain came pouring down in pailfuls. The thunder seemed to burst forth from the caverned cliffs under our feet; and the electric blazes, almost continual, lighted up the scene with a fearful distinctness.

We kept on—it was no use halting in a spot so exposed to the tempest—guided by the boy, who leaped from rock to rock with the nimbleness of a goat. He carried his shining hat in his hand, and we could perceive it glistening like a meteor before us as he waved us onward. We could hear him, too, far above the thunder, in his sharp voice warning us against any place of peculiar danger. This wild boy seemed to exult in his office, and to be at home in the midst of its perils. As he leaped and danced over the ledges in front of us, with his dark, animated features—his long hair streaming in the wind—his garb, like himself, strange and wild—at the same time screaming back in his shrill Aztecan voice—he seemed to be part of the storm itself—one of its demons. The dog kept on at his heels, following the perilous track with more seeming difficulty than the boy himself.

As though the storm had been sent specially to annoy us while we were passing the barranca, it commenced lulling away as we debouched on the other side.

We could not now be far from camp; but the darkness was opaque, and we descended the rough road but slowly. The lightning grew less frequent and less vivid. By the hoarse roaring of the torrent, which now sounded in our ears, we knew we were again approaching the bottom of the valley.

This we soon reached, striking the bank of the stream, along which the road trended for some distance downward. Here the timber was heavy, and the branches locked overhead, adding darkness and gloom to the night. The road, too, was smooth and clayey, and our horses slipped and sprawled as we went.

Once or twice, as the lightning flashed, I thought I

noticed horse-tracks in the mud. Taplin, too, had observed them, and sat in his saddle, bent and waiting for the next flash, that he might examine them more minutely. It came —a vivid and protracted blaze; and before it had darkened again the voice of my companion struck on my ear, exclaiming:

"Fresh, by Jupiter! and thick as sheep-feet!"

"You think they are fresh?"

"I am sure of it—since the rain. There again!—look! The mud hasn't settled yet. They have passed within five minutes. Fifty, if there's one! Look there! We're in for it, comrade!"

"Hush!" said I; "speak low. They can't be far ahead of us."

As I whispered this admonition, the dog, which, along with Pepé, was crawling through the mud close to our horses' heads, began to run round and whimper. Then, with a fierce growl, he dashed forward into the underwood, and commenced barking loudly. I heard my comrade's voice shouting hurriedly:

"By thunder! we're among them! Dismount, Hal, and take to the bushes—it's our only chance! Come!"

I heard him, at the same instant, come down with a heavy plash, as he vaulted from his horse.

I was preparing to follow his example when a wild yell rang in my ears; a heavy object dropped behind me on the croup, a pair of strong arms encircled me, and I was held as if in the embrace of a bear! My animal, frightened, sprang forward—then stopped, endeavoring to rear upwards, as though some one held him by the bit.

I struggled to free myself from my powerful antagonist. We rolled together to the ground. Several others flung their bodies upon me. I was overpowered and bound!

The lightning flashed. The road was filled with men—

savage-looking men. They were yelling and brandishing their naked weapons, that glistened in the blue blaze.

The lightning flashed again. I caught a glimpse of my comrade, with a number of men around him. He was lying in the mud. I thought there was blood upon his face. I thought *he was dead!*

"Taplin!" I shouted with all my strength, so as to be heard above the din.

"Well, old fellow! How are you off for ropes?" was the reply.

"Thank Goodness!" I exclaimed. "Not yet, then. He lives!"

At the same time, I could not help wondering at the fearful coolness of this man, jesting under such circumstances.

The confusion now began to subside. Our captors had nearly yelled themselves hoarse. One, who appeared to be their leader, ordered silence, and issued some directions in an undertone. I was seized by a number of men—so was my companion—and dragged back to an opening in the woods, where a large number of horses were tied to the trees.

"*Fuego!*" cried the man in authority; and in a few seconds dry sticks were collected into a pile and set on fire.

As the blaze brightened we looked around upon our foes. At the first glance I recognized the brilliant habiliments of the hacendado, Don Juan, who stood apart, conversing with him who acted as leader. The others were no peons—that was plain. They were all armed and equipped, though each of them differently from his companion, and most of them rudely. Their horses carried escopettes strapped to the saddles, and many of them were mounted with military holsters.

We had fallen into the hands of a new guerilla; and on scanning their faces more closely I easily recognized some of the ill-favored physiognomies we had noticed at San Miguel in the morning. But what caused my comrade and myself

to open our eyes wider than ever was the appearance in front of the fire of two men dressed in the uniform of our own regiment.

"More prisoners!" thought we.

We were speedily disembarrassed of the thought, when one of the men took a lighted brand from the fire, and, coming towards us, exclaimed:

"Let's see who the divil yez arr, anyhow."

"Lanty of my company!" muttered Taplin, as they approached. "Oh, the infamous scoundrel!"

"Vogel of mine; that villainous Prussian!" And the next moment the would-be ravishers stood over us.

We were soon recognized, and with joy on the part of the deserters.

"Och! blood-an'-ouns!" began the Irishman, slowly measuring his words; "Mis—ther Tap—lin, is it there ye arr? Mis—ther Lif—tin—ant Taplin, is it there ye are? Och!"

"*Was!*" cried the Prussian, addressing me in his guttural grunt, that sounded like the voice of some demon of the Hartz—"*Was! mein lieber Herr, sind Sie es! Mein Gott, it ish goot!*"

"Och! Misther Taplin," continued the Irishman, still apostrophizing my companion, "wud yez jist ordher me to be gagged and 'bucked,' or sintince me to thirty-nine on the bare back, *well laid on*, for givin' ye this nate little salute acrass yer purty face?" And so saying, the deserter struck his officer over the cheek with his open palm.

The blow was not a heavy one. It was intended more to give insult than bodily pain, and it certainly had the desired effect. Taplin's eyes appeared as if they would leap out of their sockets. His whole frame quivered with emotion; though he made no reply, knowing that that would only provoke further insult.

The German, who was equally spiteful in his inclinations towards me, bent over me, as I supposed, for the purpose of making a similar demonstration.

I was mistaken. He had stronger passions than revenge to gratify. After glancing cautiously around, to see whether any one observed him, he caught hold of the chain attached to my gold repeater; and with an adroit jerk, that showed he was no novice at the business, drew the watch from its fob. Then snapping the guard asunder, he stealthily deposited the spoil under his own jacket. Lanty had noticed the action, and speedily, though more clumsily, performed a similar pantomime over my comrade.

Several of the guerilleros had by this time gathered around us, curious to witness the interview between the deserters and their prisoners. By these gentry we were immediately relieved of our loose silver; and our swords, belts, and spurs were unbuckled, and appropriated by our captors.

We now thought they had finished robbing us, as they had completely stripped us of our trimmings; but we reasoned erroneously.

"By Jaysus, Vogel!" said Lanty, turning to the German, and pointing to the latter's ragged uniform, "it's yerself that's not too finely drissed. That's a nate coat of the kyaptin's. Wud it fit ye?"

"*Gott verdamme mich!*—dat ish goot idea," replied the other.

"I'm not in castume for a tay-party meself; but, with Misther Taplin's lave, I hope to make a betther apparence directly. The liftinant's just my size to an inch."

Here Vogel made a sign, pointing towards the leader of the guerilla.

"Oh yis," assented the Irishman, with a nod. "We'll ax him; but we must first obtane the 'consint of the officers,' you know,"

This last was said in an ironical imitation of camp phraseology.

"*Ja—ja!*" responded the German.

"Do the thing dacent and sodger-like. Well, Misther Taplin, well yez swap ayqual, or div ye want boot? I can recommind this unyform. It's owld, and has seen sarvice, as ye persave; but it's mighty cool for this hot climate. Them tails only hampers ye. The jacket'll be a hape handier among the chapparals, de ye see? Now, phwat div yez say to the swap?"

Of course there was no reply.

"Silence gives consint; he agrays to it. Now, Vogel, it's your turn to thrade with the kyaptin."

Vogel, thus appealed to, addressed himself to me, going through a somewhat similar formula, but in a barbarous mixture of language that no one on the ground understood except himself. This being concluded, and my "consint" having of course been obtained, the Irishman left us, and walked towards the leader of the guerilleros, who, with the hacendado and two or three others, still stood apart conversing.

I could see the deserter pointing to us as he addressed them. He and his comrade might justly claim the favor he was asking, for to their strength (they were both powerful men) the guerilleros were mainly indebted for our easy capture. We thought, at the time, there had been something more than Mexican arms around us in the struggle on the road.

In a few minutes the man returned, and, assisted by Vogel and several Mexicans, commenced stripping us. Our hands were first untied. Then our coats—blue undress frocks they were—were pulled off. The filthy tattered jackets of the deserters were drawn upon our arms. We made no resistance to this, as it was cold, and we knew, if

if we objected to wearing the jackets, they would leave us in our shirts. Our wrists were rebound and our ankles set free. Then the pantaloons (and even our boots and stockings) were stripped off, and replaced by the coarse, ragged overalls of Vogel and the Irishman. Our stocks and forage-caps were snatched away, and we were left bareheaded—barefooted, too; for, although our boots were too small for the deserters, two of the Mexicans (who are a small-footed race) appropriated them, without giving us theirs in exchange.

In a few minutes Lanty and Vogel were dressed up in our despoiled habiliments, vaporing over the ground in a tragic gait, and addressing each other as "Kyaptin Vogel," and "Liftinant Lanty." This they did to the great amusement of the guerilleros.

The leader of the band, with the hacendado, had now drawn near us. I could hear a portion of their conversation. I learned that the guerilla did not belong to the neighborhood, but was a spy-party that had been sent by Santa Anna from Orizava. They had arrived that morning, and it was their advance we had met in San Miguel. After the occurrence at the ranche, Don Juan had come across them, and, gladly availing himself of the opportunity for revenge, led them on our track.

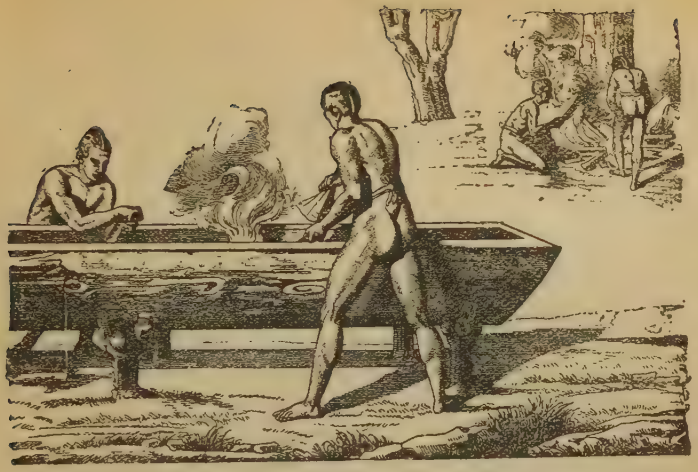
I found out, moreover, that it was their design to take us to San Andres Chalcomulco. Here the leader expected to meet Santa Anna, on his way from Orizava to La Puebla.

All at once the attention of the spy chief was attracted to the strutting deserters; and, whispering some words to Don Juan, he beckoned them to follow him to the other side of the glade. The men obeyed, and walked after him. An earnest conversation followed. The Irishman could speak Spanish. He was a deserter from the Anglo-Canadian army, and had formerly served in Spain in Evans's legion.

After awhile it became evident that some plan had been matured. Lanty and Vogel were brought up to the light of the fire. Their dresses were inspected. Our swords (which had been appropriated by others of the spies) were taken from them and buckled upon the deserters. Our horses were led forth, and upon these the metamorphosed soldiers were mounted and rode off in the direction of the American camp!

My comrade and I were then taken up, and tightly corded upon a pair of saddled mules.

A few notes of a bugle summoned the stragglers, and the next moment we were moving in single file back through the barranca.



Indians Excavating a Canoe with Fire. Old Spanish Engraving.

CHAPTER LXI.

A DEATH-STRUGGLE.

WHETHER it was that we were now more reckless of consequences, the backward journey through this fearful pass seemed far less difficult and dangerous. The storm was not raging to baffle us, it was now pitchy dark, the lightning only flashing at intervals; but the animals all followed some guide, who was, doubtless, well acquainted with the path.

On the side nearest the ranch, and about a mile from the latter, there was a road crossing the one upon which we traveled. One fork of this road led to the hacienda of Don Juan, about three miles distant. The other traversed the hills, debouching at San Miguel Soldado. They were

only bridle-roads at best, and bordered on both sides by woods and chapparal. Here our captors halted, and we heard the following dialogue:

"You will not go to my house, then, captain?"

The question was put by the young hacendado, and addressed to the spy-chief.

"I thank you, Don Juan: it would be too much out of my way. The old ranche here will cover most of us, and a night in the woods is no new thing. The general may leave Orizava to morrow, and I must meet him in San Andres. His movements may depend on what these fellows——"

Here the speaker's voice sank to a whisper, and we could not catch the remainder of the sentence.

"Very well," cried the other, spurring his horse forward. "I shall send you some refreshment as soon as possible. *Va con Dios, y mueran los Yankees!*" (God be with you, and death to the Yankees!)

And amidst the "*vivas*" of the troop at this patriotic ebullition, the young man wheeled into the cross-road and galloped off.

Near the crossing was a deserted and half-ruined rancho, almost buried in the underwood. On approaching this the guerilleros dismounted, the chief, with several others, going into the house. My comrade and myself were waiting to be taken inside. We expected our captors to accommodate us with the hospitality of a roof, less with a view to our comfort than for our safe keeping. To our surprise, this idea did not seem to strike them. We were thrown upon the ground in an open spot in front. We were firmly tied, however, hands and heels; and watched by a couple of sleepless-looking ruffians, who walked in circles round us, with their carbines thrown carelessly over their arms. Our enemies had no apprehensions of our making any attempt to escape.

The horses of the guerilla were picketed all around us,

their long lariats enabling them to crop the grass up to the spot where we lay.

We were placed upon our backs, and remained for some time in this position without conversing. We watched the thick clouds as they floated in masses along the lead-colored sky, at intervals illumined by a vivid flash.

After awhile several men arrived with mules and panniers, carrying provisions. These last were taken within the ranche, and shortly after we could hear the guerilleros feasting and making merry. A bottle of *aguardiente* had reached the hands of our two guards, and they passed it from one to the other with a degree of frequency that soon began to render them, as we thought, less watchful. But it mattered little. We had writhed and twisted until our wrists were peeled with our vain exertions. Our fastenings were thongs of raw hide, and *these had been tied by Mexicans*. We found that we could neither stretch a knot nor untwist a single strand, and we gave it up in despair.

"How easily we might do it, but for these accursed ropes!" muttered Taplin, as he wrenched and struggled to no purpose.

Since our capture we had seen nothing of the Indian boy. He had not appeared in the glade, nor on the road. What had become of him? Now, for the first time, it occurred to me that the boy had betrayed us.

Taplin endeavored to combat the suspicion. He alleged his previous friendly conduct to himself. Moreover, the boy had told him of ill-feeling which he himself bore towards the hacendado, who on some occasion had given him the whip. To suspect him was a painful thought to my comrade, who had taken a liking for the lad, partly on account of his eccentric peculiarities, but more, I should think, from the accident of his relationship to the little Anita.

"I can't think it," said he, after a long silence, in which

he had been considering every feature of the case. "No; the boy would not have taken the dog along, had he intended to betray us. Poor brute! it warned us, though too late it was. No; the lad's all right. He was frightened, and ran back home."

I could not admit the force of my friend's argument in favor of our late guide. His strange and eccentric behavior along the route, his present mysterious absence, and (now occurring to our minds) the unexplained disappearance of the pistols, all combined to convince me that the Indian had "sold" us.

I was about declaring my conviction to my friend when I felt a damp, cold object touch me on the cheek. I started, and, half raising myself upon my elbow, looked round to discover the cause.

It was nearly pitch dark, but I could see a shadowy form move off and stoop over the head of my companion, who lay several feet from me. He, too, startled as I had been, raised himself to look up, uttering the involuntary interrogation:

"What the mischief was that?"

A low whimper answered the question. It was the dog!

The animal again returned to me, placing his nose to my face as before, and wagging his bushy tail in token of friendship. I addressed him by name, but in a whisper, as an indefinite thought that moment crossed my mind that the boy might be near; and I felt a sudden but equally indefinite hope.

I cautioned Taplin to keep still. The electric light gleamed, and to my surprise I noticed that the dog held a shining object between his teeth. I saw it distinctly. It was a knife—the one that Taplin had given to the lad!

My comrade had observed it at the same time, and ejaculated rashly:

"Hurrah! the dog's got my old knife!"

"Hush!" I repeated.

The animal ran back to Taplin, and then returned to me again. He seemed to wonder why we lay so still.

I had by this time fathomed the design for which he had been sent. Poor brute! he knew nothing of it. I was filled with wonder at the cunning artifice, but that was no time to express it. As he held up his nose I seized the projecting point of the knife—it was the blade, which was open—in my teeth, and held firmly. Only for a moment. The animal, perceiving my intention to rob him of the weapon, plucked it away, slightly wounding my lip; and then, as if angry, ran off, disappearing in the darkness.

"What a pity!" ejaculated Taplin, who had rolled nearer, and witnessed the failure.

We had hardly time to exchange our regrets when the dog reappeared, but the knife was gone. No! *It was hanging from his neck!*

This time he ran first to my comrade, who attempted to seize the weapon with his teeth, but was unsuccessful, as the dog had grown shy and playful.

"Ho, perrito! Loro, ho!"

I whispered these words in an endearing tone of voice. He closed nearer and nearer, until, with a desperate stretch, I succeeded in getting the string between my teeth, determined to hold it though it should drag them out. The thong broke, and the knife fell upon the grass, directly under my face.

"Scold off the dog!" I whispered; and at the word "*Afuera!*" uttered in a tone of anger, the animal galloped away to those who had sent him.

During all this scene our sentries, who had flung themselves on the ground at a few paces' distance, were busy with their bottle and sandwiches, and had not thought of us.

"If they will only give us five minutes more!" I whispered to my companion. "Shift yourself a little more this way; turn your back upward—so, so."

We were tied with our hands behind our backs, and of course could only relieve one another. My companion, as I had desired him, turned over and lay upon his face. I rested my chin upon his back, having already caught the blade of the knife between my teeth, holding it edge outward. I then brought the edge in contact with the raw hide, and commenced moving my head horizontally backward and forward, sawing the thongs.

After a few vibrations my ear was gratified by the "snig" of the parting cord. I had cut the right turn, upon which was the knot, and after a wrench or two my comrade's hands were free. A score of seconds sufficed to make the remainder of our fastenings fly off, though we operated silently and with caution.

It now remained for us to reach the thicket, which was not twenty yards from us; and we waited for the next flash, so that we might have the whole of the dark interval that followed.

Our two guards had been joined by a third, who had brought them a fresh bottle of *aguardiente;* and the three sat together on the grass, drinking and talking merrily.

The lightning gleamed again. It was our cue; and, crawling like a pair of gigantic lizards, we succeeded in getting behind some horses, where we lay, with beating hearts, to wait for another blaze.

This came at length, and, rising to our feet, we ran lightly to the edge of the chapparal. The dog bounded forward to meet us, and the next moment I saw my companion lift some one in his arms, whom he kissed with the wildness of a maniac. It was Pepé—that strange, wild boy, to whose cunning we were indebted for our escape.

There was no time to be lost. We must get through the pass again before our pursuit commenced. We needed our guide no longer; we now knew the way through the barranca, and beyond it we were near the village of Banderilla. If pursued, we could hide in the bushes, favored by the darkness of the night. The dog might betray us in such a case. We would be better alone.

With these considerations, we dismissed the lad, who, taking the San Bernard along with him, returned on the road that led to the ranche. We, on the other hand, crept stealthily, but with haste, along the path leading to the barranca.

We soon entered the gloomy gorge, and commenced climbing up. All around us was darkness and silence, for the storm had lulled to the dead calm. Still, there was light at intervals to illuminate the terrible features of the chasm.

The lightning still played through the black masses overhead, but without the usual accompaniment of thunder. This is a common occurrence in the atmosphere of the tropics. The blazing fluid at times covered the whole country, lighting the world with a brilliancy that rivaled the sun; and the next instant every object was hidden in the obscurity of an amorphous darkness.

Through this we groped and crept onward up the pass. It was the third time for us on that same night, and we had become acquainted with the difficulties of the track. When uncertain how to proceed, we halted and waited for the next flash of lightning.

Advancing in this way, we had reached the highest point of the road, where it runs over a ledge of the precipice. Here the path is narrow, in consequence of rocks having fallen upon the ledge. The road abuts over the stream, and an object dropped from above would fall directly into the water. Below us, at least a thousand feet, the torrent foamed

and seethed, and the "sough" sounded like the voice of some distant waterfall. When the lightning lit up this hell-like chasm, we felt giddy and irresolute; for the path before us, as it wound along the ledge, seemed suspended in the air.

We were barefoot, and perhaps this was better for us. It enabled us to take a firmer hold, though our feet were scarred and cut by the sharp rocks. Taplin was foremost.

Just then I thought I heard voices, and stopped for a moment to listen. It might be the pursuers upon our track. I listened attentively, but could not hear them again. It must have been the water talking below us, and with this conviction I hastened after my companion. There was a small platform where the road turned sharp round the cliff. I remembered entering it when we passed in the early part of the night. It might have been three or four yards wide and was formed by an indentation in the cliff, where some mass of rock had given way and fallen downward. Taplin had ascended this platform, and was standing upon it to await me. I saw his tall figure outlined against the sky as I climbed up. I noticed that he stooped suddenly, placing himself in the attitude of one listening.

"Do you hear anything?" I asked, as I came alongside.

"Hush! hush! listen! By the Lord! it is—hish—sh—sh!" And, holding each other by the arm, we backed in silently under the shadow of the projecting cliff.

There were voices. There was the stroke of a horse's hoof; and the next moment two horsemen rode up on the ledge and halted. We could see them but indistinctly; and in the uncertain darkness they loomed against the sky like mounted giants. Who could they be? They were not our pursuers. They had come from the opposite direction—

that in which we were going. Who could they be? The lightning——

"Ha! villains! renegades!" shouted Taplin, springing forward—"now we shall see——"

The blaze of pistols followed the flashing of the lightning, and I could see both the horsemen fling themselves from their saddles at once. The horses turned and ran off the ledge, leaving the ground clear for our double combat. I saw Taplin grappling with one adversary. I sprang upon the other. A sword gleamed in my eyes. I caught the blade in my hands and broke it. The German oath that followed told me who was my antagonist. We clutched and rolled over on the ledge. We were both without arms; and it was now a contest of strength—who could pitch the other over the cliff! The fearful fate that threatened the weaker nerved both of us to desperation, and we struggled upon the brink, griping each other like madmen. We rose to our feet again, were about closing for another death-wrestle, when my antagonist, seemingly struck with a sudden fear, shied to one side, and, leaping down from the platform, disappeared in the darkness.

Glad to get rid of him on these terms, I did not attempt to follow, but prepared to assist my comrade, who during all this time had been engaged in a similar conflict with the Irishman. As I turned suddenly round, the blue flash of the lightning illumined a picture that sent the blood rushing through my heart. On the extreme edge of the precipice were the two uniformed figures—the soldier and his officer. The latter was hanging almost horizontally over the brink, while his adversary, firmly planted, seemed in the act of shaking him from his last hold. Before the sky darkened again I saw the tattered rags give way—a wild scream echoed along the cliff—Taplin was hurled into eternity!

I sprang forward with a shout of vengeance,

"Villain! you shall follow him!" I cried, grasping the soldier by the throat and jacket, and dragging him with all my strength towards the edge of the platform.

"What! holloa! hold on, Hal! Confound it, man! it's *me!*"

"Good Heavens—Taplin!" I exclaimed, relaxing my hold, and falling to my knees in a species of paralysis.

It was my friend himself that stood before me, and the deserter who had been hurled over the precipice! *I had forgotten the late exchange of our uniforms.*

* * * * * *

We found our horses in the woods below, and, mounting them, rode hastily to the camp, which we reached shortly after midnight.

Next morning's *reveille* awoke our regiment to the "route," and by noon of that day we were climbing the mountain road to the plains of Peroté.

Poor Taplin!—his sword waved foremost in many a fight, till it waved over his glorious grave on the red field of Molino del Rey.

After the Fandango. A Scene from real life, in Spanish America.

City of Mexico. Killing off supernumerary Dogs.

CHAPTER LXII.

AN ADIOS.

SHORTLY after the adventure of Taplin and myself, the Rifle Rangers were ordered back to Jalapa. Clayley had now recovered, and I once more enjoyed the society of my light-hearted friend. But neither that nor the smiles of the hospitable Jalapeñas could make me happy. My thoughts dwelt upon Guadalupe, and often was I harassed with the painful apprehension that I should never see her again. Better fortune, however, was in store for me.

One day Clayley and I were sitting over our wine, along with a gay party of friends, in the Fonda de Diligencias, the

principal hotel of Jalapa, when Jack touched me on the shoulder, and whispered in my ear:

"Captain, there's a Mexican wants to see ye."

"Who is it?" I demanded, somewhat annoyed at the interruption.

"It's the brother," replied Jack, still speaking in a whisper.

"The brother! What brother?"

"Of the young ladies, captain."

I started from my chair, overturning a decanter and several glasses.

"Hilloa! what's the matter?" shouted several voices in a breath.

"Gentlemen, will you excuse me?—one moment only—I—I—will——"

"Certainly! certainly!" cried my companions, all at once, wondering what *was* the matter.

The next moment I was in the *antesala*, embracing Narcisso.

"And so you are all here. When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday, captain. I came to town for you, but could not find you."

"And they are well?—all well?"

"Yes, captain. Papa expects you will come this evening, with the lieutenant and the other officer."

"The other officer! Who, Narcisso?"

"I think he was with you on your first visit to La Virgen —*un señor gordo*."

"Oh! the major! Yes, yes, we shall come; but where have you been since we met, Narcissito?"

"To Orizava. Papa has a tobacco farm near Orizava; he always goes to it when he comes up here. But, captain, we were so astonished to hear from your people that you had been a prisoner, and traveling along with us! We

knew the guerillos had some American prisoners, but we never dreamt of its being you. *Carambo!* if I had known that!"

"But how came you, Narcisso, to be with the guerilla?"

"Oh! papa had many things to carry up the country; and he, with some other families, paid Colonel Cenobio for an escort—the country is so full of robbers."

"Ah! sure. Tell me, Narcisso, how came I by this?"

"I held out the dagger.

"I know not, captain. I am ashamed to tell you that I lost it the day after you gave it me."

"Oh! never mind. Take it again, and say to your papa I shall come, and bring "*el señor gordo*" along with me."

"You will know the way, captain. Yonder is our house." And the lad pointed to the white turrets of an aristocratic-looking mansion that appeared over the tree-tops, about a mile distant from the town.

"I shall easily find it."

"Adieu, then, captain, we shall be impatient until you arrive—*hasta la tarde!*"

So saying, the youth departed.

I communicated to Clayley the cause of my temporary withdrawal; and, seizing the earliest opportunity, we left our companions over their cups.

It was now near sundown, and we were about to jump into our saddles, when I recollected my promise to bring the major. Clayley proposed leaving him behind and planning an apology; but a hint that he might be useful in "keeping off" Don Cosmé and the señora caused the lieutenant suddenly to change his tactics, and we set out for Blossom's quarters.

"We had no difficulty in persuading "*el señor gordo*" to accompany us, as soon as he ascertained where we were going. He had never ceased to remember *that* dinner. Her-

cules was brought out and saddled, and we all three galloped off for the mansion of our friends.

After passing under the shadows of green trees, and through copses filled with bright flowers, we arrived at the house, one of the fairest mansions it had ever been our fortune to enter. We were just in time to enjoy the soft twilight of an eternal spring—of a landscape *siempre verde;* and,

City of Mexico. Scene during the Carnival—Street Theatricals.

what was more to the major's mind, in time for a supper that rivaled the well-remembered dinner.

As I had anticipated, the major proved exceedingly useful during the visit. In his capacity of quartermaster, he had already picked up a little Spanish—enough to hold Don Cosmé in check over the wine; while Clayley and myself, with "Lupé" and "Luz," walked out into the veranda to "take a peep at the moon." Her light was alluring, and we could not resist the temptation of a stroll through the gardens.

It was celestial night; and we dallied along *dos y dos*, under the pictured shadows of the orange-trees, and sat upon curiously formed benches, and gazed upon the moon, and listened to the soft notes of the tropic night-birds.

The perils of the past were all forgotten, and the perils of the future—we thought not of them.

It was late when we said "*buenas noches*" to our friends, and we parted with a mutual "*hasta la mañana.*" It is needless to say that we kept our promise in the morning, and made another for the following morning, and kept that, too; and so on till the awful bugle summoned us once more to the "route."

The detail of our actions during these days would have no interest for the reader, though to us the most interesting part of our lives. There was a sameness—a monotony—it is true; but a monotony that both my friend and myself could have endured forever.

I do not even remember the details. All I can remember is, that, on the eve of our march, I found myself "cornering" Don Cosmé, and telling him plainly, to his teeth, that I meant to marry one of his daughters; and that my friend—who had not yet learnt the "lingo," and had duly commissioned me as his "go-between"—would be most happy to take the other off his hands.

I remember very well, too, Don Cosmé's reply, which was given with a half-smile, half-grin—somewhat cold, though not disagreeable in its expression. It was thus:

"Captain—*when the war is over.*"

Don Cosmé had no intention that his daughters should become widows before they had fairly been wives.

And we bade adieu once more to the light of love, and walked in the shadow of war; and we toiled up to the high tables of the Andes, and crossed the burning plains of Peroté; and we forded the cold streams of Rio Frio, and

climbed the snowy spurs of Popocatepec; and, after many a toilsome march, our bayonets bristled along the borders of the Lake Tezcoco. Here we fought—a death-struggle, too,—for we knew there was no retreat. But our struggle was crowned with victory, and the starry flag waved over the ancient city of the Aztecs.

Neither my friend nor myself escaped unhurt. We were

City of Mexico. Studio of a Spanish Artist.

shot "all over"; but, fortunately, no bones were broken, and neither of us was converted into a cripple.

And then came the "piping times of peace"; and Clayley and I spent our days in riding out upon the Jalapa road, watching for that great old family carriage, which, it had been promised, should come.

And it came rumbling along at length, drawn by twelve

A Spanish Bull Fight in the City of Mexico.

mules, and deposited its precious load in a palace in the Calle Capuchinas.

And shortly after, two officers in shining uniforms entered the portals of that same palace, sent up their cards, and were admitted on the instant. Ah! these were rare times! But rarer still—for it should only occur once in a man's lifetime—was an hour spent in the little chapel of San Bernardo.

* * * * * *

There is a convent—Santa Catarina—the richest in Mexico; the richest, perhaps, in the world. There are nuns there—beautiful creatures—who possess property (some of them being worth a million of dollars); and yet these children of heaven never look upon the face of man!

About a week after my visit to San Bernardo, I was summoned to the convent, and permitted—a rare privilege for one of my sex—to enter its sacred precincts. It was a painful scene. Poor "Mary of Mercy"! How lovely she looked in her snow-white vestments!—lovelier in her sorrow than I had ever seen her before. May God pour out the balm of oblivion into the heart of this erring but repentant angel!

* * * * * *

I returned to New Orleans in the latter part of 1848. I was walking one morning along the Levée, with a fair companion on my arm, when a well-known voice struck on my ear, exclaiming:

"I'll be dog-goned, Rowl, if it ain't the cap'n!"

I turned, and beheld Raoul and the hunter. They had doffed the regimentals, and were preparing to "start" on a trapping expedition to the Rocky Mountains.

I need not describe our mutual pleasure at meeting, which was more than shared by my wife, who had often made me detail to her the exploits of my comrades. I inquired for

Chane. The Irishman, at the breaking up of the "war-troops," had entered one of the old regiments, and was at this time, as Lincoln expressed it, "the first sargint of a kump'ny."

I could not permit my old ranging comrades to depart without a *souvenir*. My companion drew off a pair of rings, and presented one to each on the spot. The Frenchman, with the gallantry of a Frenchman, drew his upon his finger; but Lincoln, after trying to do the same, declared, with a comical grin, that he couldn't "git the eend of his wipin' stick inter it." He wrapped it up carefully, however, and deposited it in his bullet-pouch.

My friends accompanied us to our hotel, where I found them more appropriate presents than the rings. To Raoul I gave my revolving pistols, not expecting to have any further use for them myself; and to the hunter, that which he valued more than any other earthly object, the major's "Dutch gun." Doubtless, ere this, the *zündnadel* has slain many a "grisly b'ar," among the wild ravines of the Rocky Mountains.

A few days after I had a visit from Major Twing, who, with Hillis and others of my old comrades, was on his way to the frontier garrisons of Texas. From him I learned that Blossom, on account of his gallant behavior in the affair at La Virgen, had received the brevet of a colonel, and was now employed in the department at Washington.

Courteous reader! I was about to write the word "adieu," when "Little Jack" handed me a letter, bearing the Vera Cruz post-mark. It was dated, "*La Virgen, November* 1, 1849." It concluded as follows:

"You were a fool for leaving Mexico, and you'll never be half as happy anywhere else as I am here. You would hardly know the "ranche"—I mean the fields. I have cleared off the weeds, and expect next year to take a couple

of hundred bales off the ground. I believe I can raise as good cotton here as in Louisiana; besides, I have a little corner for vanilla. It would do your heart good to see the improvements; and little Luz, too, takes such an interest in all I do. Haller, I'm the happiest man in creation.

"I dined yesterday with our old friend Cenobio; and you should have seen him when I told him the man he had in his company. I thought he would have split his sides. He's a perfect old trump this Cenobio, notwithstanding his smuggling propensities.

"By the way, you have heard, I suppose, that our 'other old friend,' the padre, has been shot. He took part with Paredes against the Government. They caught him at Queretaro, and shot him with a dozen or so of his 'beauties' in less than a squirrel's jump.

"And now, my dear Haller, a last word. We all want you to come back. The house at Jalapa is ready for you, and Doña Joaquina says it is yours, and SHE wants you to come back.

"Don Cosmé, too—with whom it appears Lupé was the favorite—HE wants you to come back. Old Cenobio, who is still puzzled about how you got the knife to cut through the adobés, HE wants you to come back. Luz is fretting after Lupé, and SHE wants you to come back. And, last of all, *I* want you to come back. So 'stand not on the order' of your coming, but come at once.

"Yours forever,

"EDWARD CLAYLEY."

Reader, do *you* want me to come back? *

* I am happy to say that the reader has long since kindly answered this question in the affirmative.—AUTHOR.

June, 1853.

NOTES.

"*The land of Anahuac.*"—Page 5.] (Pronounced *Anna-hwawk.*) The ancient name of Mexico. Both Spanish and Mexican writers frequently make use of this name when speaking poetically of the country.

"*Varied is the aspect of that picture-land.*"—Page 6.] No country on the face of the earth is more varied in its aspect than Mexico. Its surface is a constantly-changing panorama of hill, mountain, valley, and plain; and you have before you, at different periods of your journey, the *flora* of the different zones. Sometimes you may behold that of all three at a single glance. Perhaps no country is better entitled to the poetical appellation of "picture-land."

"'*Rolling*' *landscapes.*"—Page 6.] The term "rolling," as applied to the surface of a country, is, I believe, American. It is used to designate a peculiar geological formation, common throughout the American continent. It is not exactly what would be termed a "*hilly country*," but one whose surface consists of parallel and rounded ridges. "These undulations remind one of the ocean after a mighty storm, when the crisped foam has died upon the waves and the big swell comes bowling in. They look as though they had once been such waves, that by an omnipotent mandate had been suddenly transformed to earth and stood still!"—*Scalp-hunters.* Prairies of this peculiar formation are termed "rolling prairies."

"*Jornada.*"—Page 7.] *Jornada* (pronounced *hornada*) means a journey. The *jornada de caballo* (journey on horseback) and the *jornada de atajo* (journey with a mule-train) are different—the latter, of course, being much shorter than the former. It is possible in a single *jornada de caballo* to pass through all the scenes described in the first chapter of this book.

"*Pescador.*"—Page 7.] *Pescador*—fisherman.

"*Polacca.*"—Page 7.] Small vessels of "polacca" rig—that is, with masts all in one piece—are very common throughout all the seas of Spanish America. They present a beautiful appearance when thus

rigged, the eye being pleased with the unbroken line of the tall and tapering masts.

"*Piragua.*"—Page 7.] *Piraguas* (pronounced *peerawgwas*) are small, sloop-rigged vessels, in use among the West Indies and along the coasts of the Gulf. They are used in the coasting trade, carrying fruit, fish, etc. They may be seen also on the Lower Mississippi and the bayous of Louisiana, among the French creoles of those parts. They are there termed "pirogues."

"*A foreign flag.*"—Page 7.] Alluding to the English mail-steamer. Mexico has no steam navy—in fact, few ships of any kind. Her two war-steamers, *Guadalupe* and *Moctezuma*, during the late war took shelter in the harbor of Havana to avoid being captured by the American fleet. They were sold at this period (to the Spanish Government, I believe).

"*Principal port.*"—Page 7.] Vera Cruz is the principal seaport of Mexico; but withal its commerce is very insignificant when compared with that of Liverpool, New Orleans, or any of the great English or American ports.

"*Slightly-formed, cadaverous men.*"—Page 7.] Supposing them to be Mexicans, this character is just. The "men" of Mexico, but particularly those who dwell in the towns, are small and bilious-looking. The women present a better appearance, and, in general, are fine-looking creatures. It was a common saying among the officers of the American army that the "women of Mexico were the best *men* of the country."

Sometimes, on the landing of the mail-steamer at Vera Cruz, a few fresh-colored, robust forms, in caps and tweed shooting-jackets, may be seen to step ashore. These gentry are "John Bulls," however, many of whom have established themselves in the country, and, along with the French, manage both its mines and its commerce.

"*Snow-drift.*"—Page 8.] This sand-hill formation is not peculiar to Mexico, but there is, perhaps, more of it to be found along the Gulf coast than elsewhere.

"*Coup-de-soleil.*"—Page 9.] The "*coup-de-soleil*" (sun-stroke) often occurred to the soldiers of the American army while campaigning in Mexico, as it is now occurring to those of the English force at Rangoon. Quite a large number of both men and officers fell victims to this sudden and terrible visitation of the climate.

"*Norte.*"—Page 9.] The "*norté*," literally "north wind," but more often a tempest, prevails at certain seasons along the coast of the Mexican Gulf. It is called "norther" by the Texans and the seamen. It

is much dreaded by the skippers of those seas—the more so as the inhospitable coast of Mexico presents so few points where ships can find either shelter or anchorage. The "norther," as its name implies, blows from the north, and carries with it an icy coldness, which, it is said, favors the yellow fever, or *vomito prieto* (black vomit), as the Spaniards call it.

"*Almost harborless.*"—Page 9.] There are but few harbors along the shores of the Mexican Gulf that admit large vessels. In fact, there are few of any sort, either on the Atlantic or Pacific side of Mexico. It would seem as if Nature had not designed that this country should be the seat of a great commerce.

"*Gigantic llianas.*"—Page 10.] There is no feature of the tropical forest more striking than the huge parasitical plants. They are often seen of more than a foot in diameter, like great trees of themselves, and reaching, sometimes horizontally, sometimes diagonally, across the vista of your path. The dark iron-color and corrugated bark of these monster vines give them a singular appearance; but it is impossible for the traveler to view them winding around the tree trunk without being struck with their resemblance to great serpents.

"*Bamboo-briers.*"—Page 10.] Many species of large briers (*smilax*) are found in the Mexican underwoods.

"*Scarlet vine.*"—Page 10.] So called from its beautiful red blossoms. It is not uncommon to see large trees completely covered with the foliage of this vine, and these again hidden by its flowers, looking like an immense pyramid of scarlet blossoms.

"*Bignonia.*"—Page 10.] The beautiful trumpet-shaped corollas of this vine are the favorite resort of the humming-birds, which often disappear within the flowers while feeding upon them.

"*The palma real.*"—Page 11.] *Palma real*—the royal palm (*attalea*)—is one of the tallest and most beautiful of the palm tribe. It is, I believe, the same as is known by the name "Palmyra palm," though in Spanish America it is termed *palma real*. It frequently grows to the height of a hundred feet; and, strangely enough, a very small species of palm, called by the Spanish Americans "*cana de la India*" (Indian cane), is always found growing near to it.

"*Corozo.*"—Page 11.] Another beautiful species of Mexican palm. Under the leaves the fruit is produced, and consists of a nut about the size of a walnut, and, like the latter, encased in a pulpy substance. This substance is gummy and fibrous, and adheres to the shell with

much tenacity. The nuts of the corozo grow in immense clusters, after the manner of grapes; and, hanging down along the trunk under the umbel of the fronds, add much to the fine appearance of the tree. The trunk of the corozo looks as if it had been turned in a lathe, so smooth and rounded is it. I believe the corozo is the same as the *palma redonda* (round palm), and that among the Mexicans these names are used indifferently.

"*Abanico.*"—Page 11.] "Fan-palm." The well-known fan-palm, or talipot-tree (*Corypha umbraculifera*), is a native of the East Indies, where it is distinguished for its beauty and numerous uses; but, notwithstanding, there are several species of the fan-plant in America, and they are known by the name "*abanico*," which signifies a fan. Like their eastern congeners, they are put to many uses. Their trunks are employed to enclose the "corrals," or cattle-pens; their vast leaves make roofs for the houses; and mats and sombreros (hats) are woven out of them.

"*Wax palm.*"—Page 11.] (*Ceroxylon andicola.*) This species exudes from its bark a resinous substance resembling wax: hence its vulgar name. The substance is used for making light.

"*Acrocomia.*"—Page 11.] Called by Humboldt *Palma melicoton.* This is a beautiful species, with a spacious trunk and plume-like leaves. It is found in great plenty on the Upper Orinoco. It produces a farinaceous fruit, growing in enormous racemes of one hundred and fifty to two hundred on one petiole, and of a deep yellow color, like the yolk of an egg. These fruits are of a sweetish taste, and both as nutritive and wholesome as either plantains or bananas. The Indians are extremely fond of them, and use them to a large extent.

"*Mammey.*"—Page 11.] (*Mammea Americana.*) A tree whose timber as well as fruit is valuable. The fruit is somewhat like a cocoanut, stripped of the fibrous rind, on the outside; but the shell, when broken (and this is easily done, as the latter is thin), discloses a beautiful saffron-colored pulp, which surrounds several large smooth seeds of a chestnut color. This pulp is excellent eating, and the fruit is seen in all the "plazas" (market-places) of Mexican cities.

"*Mahogany-tree.*"—Page 11.] The name of the mahogany-tree (*Swietenia mahogani*) in Spanish America is "caoba-tree." It is found throughout all tropical America; but that of Southern Mexico is esteemed the best.

"*Tanagers.*"—Page 11.] There are several species of tanagers in Mexico. They are small birds, of bright plumage. One species is of the purest, unmixed scarlet color. They do not take to the cage, like some

other birds, but usually flutter themselves to death or pine away under their captivity.

"*Noisy lories.*"—Page 11.] The parrots—called "lorettos" by the Mexicans—are very garrulous in the woods. There are many species peculiar to Mexico.

"*Resplendent trogons.*"—Page 11.] These beautiful birds are becoming better known than formerly. There were supposed to be only two or three species until lately; but the tropical forests of America have turned out nearly a dozen new species within the last few years.

"*The toucans.*"—Page 11.] The toucans are becoming better known to the world, through the exertions of Mr. Gould, the ornithologist, who has already made collections of different species. The same remark may apply, and with greater appropriateness, to the *trochili* and *colibri* (the humming-birds), of which beautiful and spirit-like forms Mexico is the favorite home.

"*Carpenter-bird.*"—Page 12.] *Picus principalis*, or ivory-billed woodpecker. This is the largest of the woodpecker tribe, and his name of "carpenter-bird" is, no doubt, derived from the noise which he creates while pecking for his food under the bark of decayed trees. This hammering can be heard at the distance of a mile. "Wherever he frequents," says Wilson, "he leaves numerous monuments of his industry behind him. We there see enormous trees with cartloads of bark lying around their roots, and chips of the trunk itself, in such quantities as to suggest the idea that half a dozen ax-men had been at work there for the whole morning."

The ivory-billed woodpecker is the inhabitant of intertropical countries, and in the United States he is only found in the more southern parts.

"*Crested curassow.*"—Page 12.] A great many species of the curassow tribe are already described by ornithologists, and no doubt others still unknown to naturalists may be found in the vast jungles of South America and Mexico.

"*Turkey of Honduras.*"—Page 12.] It was for a long time supposed that the wild turkey of North America (*Meleagris gallipavo*) was also an inhabitant of the southern part of that continent. This is now known not to be the case. The bird mistaken for the turkey of the north must have been either the curassow or the species in question, "the turkey of Honduras." The last may fairly be ranked with birds of the first class, not only as regards plumage, but in the quality of its flesh. The plumage is of a dark mottled green, with metallic luster,

and the form of the bird is very similar to the *Meleagris gallipavo;* but it is of smaller size. Few birds excel in beauty of form and color the turkey of Honduras.

"*Graceful roe.*"—Page 12.] The common deer of Mexico is a small and exceedingly graceful species of the red deer of the north (*Cervus Virginianus*).

"*Caiman.*"—Page 12.] Sometimes written "*cayman*," of the same species as the alligator (*Alligator Mississippiensis*). These animals are fierce in direct proportion to the wildness of the district which they inhabit.

"*Iguana.*"—Page 12.] The iguana (pronounced *eegwana*) is a lizard, frequently arriving at the enormous dimensions of more than three feet in length. A singular crest rises upon the upper part of its head, and extends along the back as far as half-way down the tail—resembling, more than anything I can think of, a saw placed teeth-upward. Under the throat of the iguana there is a fold or sac of loose cuticle, reaching from the lips to the breast—not unlike what is seen upon oxen, under the common name of "dewlap." The iguana is of a dull green color; but the females, which are smaller than the males, are frequently seen of a beautiful clear green. It is an oviparous animal, and the eggs are deposited in holes in the sand, or in the earth, on the borders of rivers, to the number of forty or more. The eggs are eaten by the Indians and Mexicans. So, too, the flesh, which is esteemed a great delicacy in most parts of Spanish America and the West Indies. It is white and tender, and tastes not unlike chicken.

The iguana lives mostly in the trees, and generally takes to them when hunted. Sometimes, however, it plunges under water, if in the chase it should arrive at a river or lake. It can remain thus for a considerable time without breathing. It is usually hunted by dogs trained for the purpose; but, as soon as the creature is "treed," the hunter, by whistling, prevents it from hiding itself altogether until he has thrown the noose of a lazo over its head, which he does with great dexterity. It is said that the iguana is so enchanted by the music of whistling that it will even permit itself to be touched with a pole without moving from the perch. When noosed with a lazo, it is jerked down from the tree and killed.

"*The basilisk.*"—Page 13.] The basilisk, fabulously celebrated as a creature whose glance produced death, is one of the most innocent of the lizard tribe. It lives upon the banks of streams, and feeds upon insects. There is a loose skin under its throat, and a scaly crest rises upon the back of its head, which serves it as a sort of sail when swim-

ming. It is not more than four or five inches in length, and its flesh is eaten by the Indians, who esteem it equal to the iguana. In fact, the latter is not the only lizard which is eaten by the aborigines of America. Nearly all the species are prized as articles of food.

"*The biting geckotin.*"—Page 13.] Called "*cotejo*" by the Spanish Americans. This is a small yellow lizard, with black stripes and one white one running longitudinally along the spine. Its belly is white, and its feet are long and hand-like. It is nocturnal in its habits, and is found among dry logs and old walls, where it hunts for insects. Its bite is said to produce fever, and it is one of the few lizards that the Indians will *not* eat.

"*The macaurel.*"—Page 13.] The macaurel is a very large snake, similar to the boa in color and habits. It is a tree-climber, and feeds upon animals and birds.

"*The tiger-snake.*"—Page 13.] The tiger-snake (*Culebra tigre*) is so called on account of the spots on its body resembling those on the Mexican tiger (jaguar). When the tiger-snake is irritated and makes to strike its object, it raises its head several feet from the surface of the ground. There are individuals of this species twelve feet in length.

"*Cascabel.*"—Page 13.] The cascabel is well known as the "rattle-snake" (*Crotalus horridus*) of North America. There are several species more or less venomous.

"*Coral-snake.*"—Page 13.] The coral-snake is one of the most venomous of the serpent family. Its bite, if not cured by the juice of the "guaco-plant" (*Mikania guaco*) or some other antidote, is almost certain to prove fatal. It derives its name from its color, which is of the hue of coral, with rings of a darker color. The coral-snake is much dreaded by the natives of South America.

"*Tillandsia.*"—Page 13.] The well-known Spanish moss, which, like long streamers, hangs from the branches of various species of trees in a tropical forest. It is sometimes called "old man's beard," from its resemblance to gray hair. It is used by the people where it is found to stuff mattresses, sofas, harness, etc., and is esteemed equal to curled horsehair. Its botanical name is *Tillandsia usneoides.*

"*Ouistiti.*"—Page 13.] There are many species of the ouistiti monkeys in tropical America—some of them not much larger than rats. If any monkeys may be called beautiful, these deserve that name.

"*Zambo.*"—Page 13.] The "zambo" monkey is one of the largest and fiercest of the family of *quadrumana.* He is often seen in the

Mexican forests as large as a Newfoundland dog. They go in troops, and will attack human beings when assailed by the latter. The zambo is of a ferruginous or brownish color, uniform all over the body.

"*The ocelot.*"—Page 13.] The "onza" of the Spanish Americans is a small species of panther. It is harmless, except when "at bay." It possesses a keen vision and sense of hearing. It is shy of man, and nocturnal in its habits.

"*The panther.*"—Page 13.] The panther (*pantera*) of the Spanish Americans is altogether a different animal from either the panther of the East or the panther (improperly so called) of the North Americans. The animal of this name in South America is a smaller species than the jaguar, of nearly similar markings, but much more voracious in proportion to its size. It keeps within the deepest recesses of the jungle, and only comes out into the open country when pressed by hunger.

"*The lynx.*"—Page 13.] The lynx is the "wild cat" of North America, and is sometimes called the "catamount." There are several distinct species established by naturalists. The Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*) and the bay lynx (*Lynx rufus*) are the best known.

"*Gusanitos.*"—Page 14.] The gusanitos are a species of fire-fly, smaller and less brilliant than either of the cocuyos. The male alone is a winged insect, and at all hours of the night may be seen flying over the roads, in the woods and fields. The female lies hid all day among the leaves. At night she appears, shining like a glow-worm, while the male flies around her, shedding his light at intervals. The gusanito is of a brownish-black color. It is the only fire-fly which is found so far north as the latitude of the United States. There it is frequently termed the "lightning-bug."

"*Vampire.*"—Page 14.] The existence of the bloodsucking bat is not a fable, as some suppose. Two or three species are found in the forests of tropical America having this character. Their principal food is insects; but they attack the larger animals, and even man when asleep, and, puncturing the flesh with their sharp mandibles, drink the blood. Animals have often been found dead, their death caused in this manner; and travelers, who went to sleep without taking proper precautions, have waked up again to find themselves wounded by the vampire, and faint from the loss of blood. They are said to draw the blood while poised upon their whirring wings, thus fanning the wound, so that its pain does not awaken the sleeper. There are two or more species that are fond of blood. One—a very large kind, a foot or more in length—preys upon animals, while that which attacks man is a

much smaller sort. There are many species of bats that are quite harmless, and live only on vegetable substances.

"*Lechuza*."—Page 14.] This great owl preys upon squirrels, rabbits, and other small animals. Its cry is of the most disagreeable kind, and is often likened by the Mexicans to the groan of a man who is half strangled.

"*Dog-wolf*."—Page 15.] The same as the prairie wolf (*Lupus latrans*), or barking wolf of the north. It is called by the Mexicans "coyote." Its name of "barking-wolf" is derived from its cry, which begins with three short barks, like those of a dog, and ends in a long and piteous howl.

"*Bell-frog*."—Page 15.] The traveler in the southern forest is struck with the numerous voices of cicadas, tree-toads, and frogs, that reach his ear. The various species of these creatures are but little known. There are many species of *hyla* and *hyloides* undescribed. The "bell-frog" (*Hyla viridis*) is so termed from its note, which may be easily distinguished among the others by its clear metallic sound, resembling the tinkling of a small bell. It is also sometimes called the "green tree-frog," from its color, and the habit of dwelling upon the trees.

The loud "ll-l-l-uk" of the tree-toad (*Hylaversicolor*) is also something strange, when falling suddenly upon the ear of the solitary traveler. This note is uttered most frequently when rain approaches, and it can be heard at a good distance. The "Savanna cricket" is another of the *hylæ*—the smallest known. It is a beautiful little creature, and derives its name from its chirp, which is not very dissimilar to that of the common house-cricket.

"*Skunk*."—Page 16.] The skunk (*Mephitis chinga*), sometimes improperly termed "polecat," exists in great plenty in the tropical forests. The air is sometimes filled with their disagreeable odor, and then you may be sure that some other creature has enraged it, as it only emits its peculiar scent when defending itself against an enemy.

"*Cocoa-palm*."—Page 16.] The cocoa-palm (*Cocus nucifera*) is indigenous to America, and in many parts this magnificent tree is found growing wild. It is cultivated, however, for the sake of its nutritious and agreeable nuts.

"*Sweet lime*."—Page 16.] Many species of limes, some of gigantic size, are grown in the orchards of Mexico, particularly around Jalapa.

"*Shaddock*."—Page 16.] This tree is an exotic in Mexico, where it flourishes well, producing its great globes to perfection, and forming an ornament. The guava-tree is also found here.

"*Aguacate.*"—Page 16.] (*Laurus Persea*). This tree produces a fruit about the size of a large pear, and of a green color, mottled with black blotches. Its fruit is insipid, but it is much prized by the Mexican gourmands for their soup—why, I cannot divine. It is sliced into the soup in a raw state, and then eaten.

"*Cherimolla.*"—Page 16.] Or "cherimoya"—considered by many the most luscious of all fruits. It is as large as a cocoa-nut, and somewhat of the appearance and taste of a very ripe pear.

"*Palmetto.*"—Page 18.] The "palmiche," or "mountain palm"—sometimes also called "cabbage palm," and known in Florida as the "palmetto."

"*Yuccas.*"—Page 18.] Many species of yucca are indigenous to Mexico. Some of them bear edible fruit.

"*Log cabin.*"—Page 22.] In the forest-covered mountains the "log-cabin," not unlike that of the Western backwoods, is common. The picturesque hamlets of La Hoya, Las Vigas, and other mountain villages of Mexico, are built of logs, these being the readiest material in such places.

"*Carbonero.*"—Page 22.] In most of the Mexican cities charcoal is the only fuel used, and this is obtained from the mountain forests. No fires are made for warmth, and there are few houses that have either a grate or a furnace. Stoves are unknown, and the kitchen, with its "brazero," is the only part of the house where fire is kindled.

From morning till night the "carbonero" fills the streets with his doleful cry—"*Carbon! carbon!*" (charcoal).

"*Arriero.*"—Page 22.] The "arriero"—the muleteer, or rather the "carrier" of Mexico—with his picturesque costume, his long journeyings, and his trustworthiness, has been so often the theme of admiration and description upon the part of travelers, that we need not say more of him here.

"*Ice of the glaciers.*"—Page 22.] The gentry of the Mexican cities indulge in the luxury of ice, or, rather, frozen snow, which is brought down from the mountains of Popocatepec, Orizava, etc.

"*The 'cumbre' of Orizava.*"—Page 23.] The Peak of Orizava, so called in the language of the country. Orizava was once an active volcano, and the flame issuing from its apex suggested its poetical name, which is Indian, and means "the Burning Star."

"*Comanches.*"—Page 26.] The most warlike and powerful of modern

Indian tribes. They inhabit the western part of Texas, and make regular forays both upon the Mexican and American settlements.

"*Calvé.*"—Page 27.] The *prima donna* of a French operatic *troupe*, then very popular among the Orleannois, more especially with the French creoles. Half a score of duels were fought among these fiery people, originating in disputes about the merits of the *cantatrice*.

"*Tremé.*"—Page 27.] One of the faubourgs of the old city of New Orleans—a quarter famous for assassinations and night-brawls. It is in the neighborhood where most of the quadroon and masked balls are held.

"*The Peaks.*"—Page 28.] The Spanish Peaks, near Santa Fé, are a well-known landmark of the mountain trappers.

"*Store-keeper.*"—Page 28.] The contempt of the "mountain men" (the trappers) for all shopkeepers—called by them "store-keepers"—is quite as great as that which Rob Roy entertained for the worthy weavers of Glasgow.

"*Crow.*"—Page 29.] Lincoln refers to an Indian of the "Crow" tribe, who inhabit the banks of the Yellowstone River. These Indians are a fine race of men.

"*Grande.*"—Page 29.] The Rio Grande of Mexico, called by the trappers "the Grand River."

"*Debt.*"—Page 29.] I alluded to an adventure in the Rocky Mountains, several years before, in which, but for Lincoln, I should have lost my life.

"*Craps.*"—Page 29.] A popular game among the creoles of New Orleans, played by dice.

"*Sign.*"—Page 29.] The trapper phrase for traces or marks: a "beaver sign"—the tracks or other marks that indicate the presence of the beaver.

"*Calaboose.*"—Page 30.] The municipal prison of New Orleans is termed "calaboose," from its ancient Spanish name, "*calabozo.*"

"*Recorder.*"—Page 30.] The magistrate of New Orleans who attends to the police cases is termed the Recorder.

"*Puncheon.*"—Page 31.] *Penchant.*

"*Yeller-bellies.*"—Page 31.] The contemptuous phrases of "yellow-hided" and "yellow-bellies" were applied to the Mexicans by our soldiers and backwoodsmen on account of the yellow, coppery complexion of the half-breeds, so numerous in Mexico.

"*Elected an officer.*"—Page 32.] The officers of most of the regiments who served under the name of "volunteers" in the Mexican war were elected by their own men, but afterwards commissioned by the Government. In many instances the election was only a form, most of the officers being appointments of the colonel.

"*Creole.*"—Page 33.] This word is almost always misunderstood in England. A creole is not a person of mixed African blood, but one of the pure Caucasian race, born in America. The word in New Orleans is only applied to natives of the place, who are mostly of French extraction. The synonym in Spanish is *criollo*, and means a native Spanish American. Persons of mixed blood may be creole quadroons, creole mulattoes, but never "creoles." The French creoles of New Orleans are a handsome race. The females are celebrated for their beauty. The men have many good qualities, but are prone to quarrel hastily, and numerous duels, both with sword and pistol, are the consequence. The creoles are a much finer race of men than the Frenchmen of France itself, although the latter will not admit this.

"*Whole team.*"—Page 34.] "A whole team" is a Western phrase, which represents a man of no ordinary capacity. "A whole team and a cross dog under the wagon," is the *ne plus ultra* of cleverness.

"*Licker.*"—Page 34.] To take liquor—to drink. "Take a smile" is another of those fancy phrases for taking a glass in which America abounds.

"*Armory.*"—Page 35.] In all the American cities there are volunteer corps, who have large buildings where they keep their arms and accoutrements. These were used during the Mexican war as rendezvous for recruiting, drill, etc.

"*Lobos.*"—Page 38.] *Lobo* signifies "a wolf," and also a "sea-wolf" or "seal." Hence the name as applied to the island. There are many islands around the Spanish American coasts, each of which bears the name "Island of Seals." The Lobos here spoken of is an uninhabited islet, about a mile in circumference, formed upon a coral foundation, and surrounded by a coral reef.

"*Palmetto State.*"—Page 48.] South Carolina has adopted the name of the "Palmetto State," from the beautiful tree of that name, which there grows in abundance.

"*Augusta.*"—Page 49.] This, being a frontier town, and affording an easy means of escape for certain criminals of South Carolina, who could not be pursued over the line, held in earlier times a very bad reputation.

THE END.